

punk planet

ISSUE #54 | MARCH AND APRIL 2003

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notes from underground

Remembering Joe Strummer | Clear Channel Puts the Squeeze on Indie Bookers | Cursive



where have all the musicians gone?

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« unloved and weeded out »

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CD

PP

54

"I'm not a spokesperson! Never was to anybody. They can hose off, man."
—**Joe Strummer**

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the risks

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intro54

Sometimes it feels like these introductions are superfluous; it feels like the issue itself does such a good job of speaking for itself, that I'm really just getting in its way by doing my little dance up here on page three. This is definitely one of those issues.

Take, for example our cover story, "Where Have All the Musicians Gone?" It so clearly, precisely, and forcefully makes a case for itself, there's very little I have to do to set it up. The story asks a simple question: In this time of perpetual war, why aren't those that are most visible standing up and speaking out?

A ton of amazing artists rise up to answer by saying, essentially, "Nevermind the mainstream bands, too afraid to spoil their supper by saying the unpopular things, *we're* here to say it." And say it they do, boldly and bravely. These folks—folks just like you and me—are speaking out against the seemingly inevitable wars to come. These are only a handful of the voices starting to speak loudly. I hope you'll take their lead and join in.

This issue, the artists are here to say a lot of things. Sadly, one of those things is to say goodbye to Joe Strummer. When the former Clash singer died in December, it caught everyone here by surprise. Joey Ramone had been sick, so when he died you,

in some way, saw it coming. But Strummer had just been through on tour; just put out a new album; and seemed to be out there living life as fully as he did 25 years ago. Frequent *Punk Planet* contributor Trevor Kelley stepped up to the plate and offered to edit a section where people could remember Joe. The result—featuring a number of artists that also appear in "Where Have All the Musicians Gone", a welcome accident—is truly moving. Joe will be missed by all who were touched by his work.

Finally, sometimes there are unexpected threads that show up in issues of *Punk Planet*. This time around, it's the specter of September 11th. A year and a half after the attacks, they continue to haunt these pages—in interviews with *Get Your War On* creator David Rees and others, throughout much of Static, and the article "The War Comes Home"—just as they continue haunt our lives. Why? To me, comic artist David Rees puts it perfectly when he said "It's a very radical sensibility to not forget the pain of that day." Indeed.

Well, as always this turned out to be a little longer than I expected. I'll stop now, as you've got a lot of reading ahead of you. Enjoy it.

Talk to you soon,

DAN

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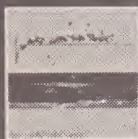


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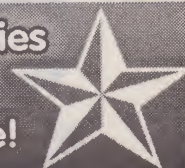
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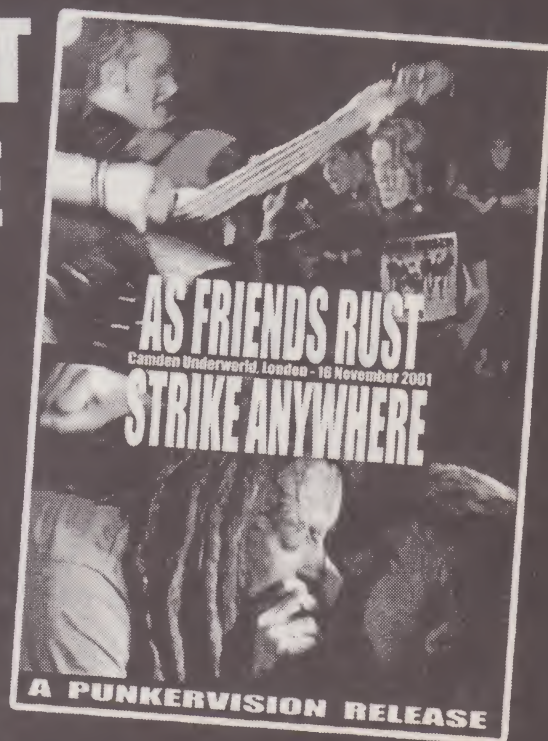


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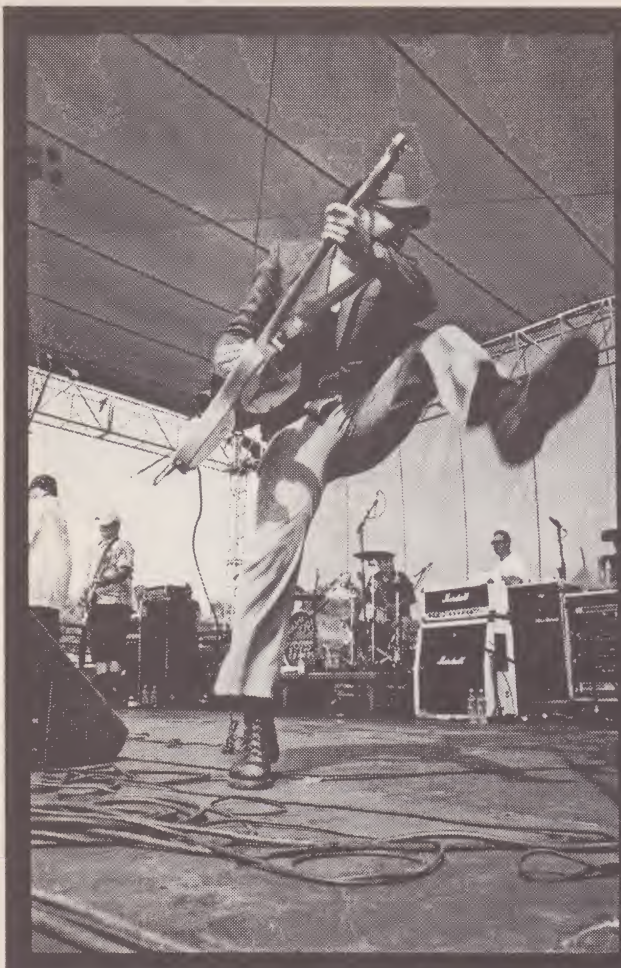


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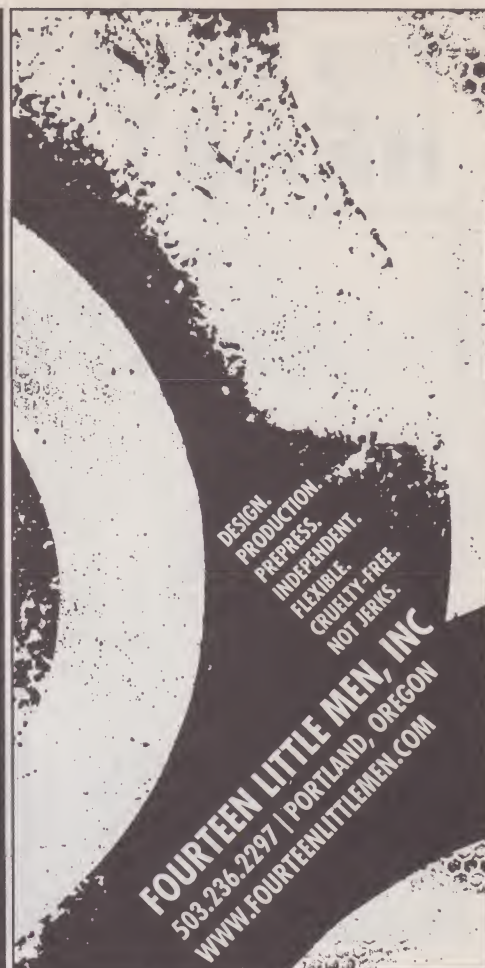


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Jawbroken

► Punk Planet and Trevor Kelley,

We are writing this letter regarding the most recent issue of *Punk Planet* in response to the Jawbreaker cover story [PP53]. As a band, we have to take issue with Trevor Kelley's assertions in the story's introduction. He wrote:

"Getting antsy to play music again, [Bauermeister] joined Chicago pop-punk troop Horace Pinker in 1999. It was a decision he would regret making. Horace Pinker, a band that had been around for close to 10 years at that point, seemed to glow with the phrase 'featuring former Jawbreaker bassist Chris Bauermeister' and after a joyless tour across Canada in the summer of 2000, Bauermeister quit."

This simply isn't true. Perhaps, in searching for a *Behind The Music*-style controversy, Kelley was attempting to make Chris' involvement with the band fit a rockumentary formula. In reality, Chris decided to quit Horace Pinker because we are still touring and he devotes most of his time to his PhD work and his wife.

Chris sets things straight (via email from Germany): In a typically journalistic fashion, Trevor has taken liberties and extrapolated on what were essentially factual statements on my part. Those are not my words. I did decide to quit after the 2000 tour because it sucked for me. I was sick the entire time and didn't enjoy touring anymore, so I said something to that effect. I never said I regretted joining Horace Pinker.

Let's paint a more accurate portrait of reality here. First of all, we are friends, and playing with Chris was not an exercise in pushing product. Touring with All Systems Go (whose line-up features ex-Doughboys and ex-Big Drill Car members), we rarely played to more than one or two hundred

people (where is the "glow" here?). When we played local shows, the audiences tended to top out below that. Our EP *Copper Regret*, recorded with Chris, has certainly not gone gold. Horace Pinker *never* promoted themselves or endorsed the phrase "featuring former Jawbreaker bassist Chris Bauermeister" and even told labels and booking agents not to advertise us that way. These were band decisions that Chris was a part of making and that we even talk about in our interview for *Punk Planet* issue #37:

Punk Planet: It's interesting because it seems that so far, there's been little fanfare about your joining HP, at least not compared to the hoopla over Jets to Brazil—and you really don't seem to mind. You probably prefer it. How do you think Jawbreaker's legacy will impact your work with HP?

Chris: I do prefer it. I think a band should be dealt with as a whole, not individual celebrities. As I've said before, that's what I really like about HP. That's one thing I really hated about the whole major label thing; they don't seem to know how to market anything but divas. I'm realistic enough to recognize, though, that *Copper Regret* is going to get a certain degree of 'ex-Jawbreaker' marketing, but if that gets more people to listen to HP, great. On the other hand, I think it's preposterous if that eclipses the band in any way. I mean, the band was around long before I joined it. Hell, we toured with them; that's where I know them from originally.

According to Chris, in the interview with Trevor "I probably mentioned the 'ex-Jawbreaker' mostly because we were talking about Blake's attempts to escape the Jawbreaker tag."

What Trevor said about Horace Pinker is simply not true. We do not want to make a big deal out of this, but when someone purposefully distorts the truth, we feel that

we need to respond. All we have ever done over the past 10 years is work very hard to get our music heard and try to release quality records with almost no label support. It is so typical that someone who knows absolutely nothing about our band would make negative and untrue comments in a well-respected publication.

Sincerely,

Horace Pinker and Chris Bauermeister

Punk pornographers step up to the soap box.

► Punk Planet,

I'd like to take a moment to comment on the punk porn article that appeared in *Punk Planet* ["Pay to Cum" PP52]. It was one of the first broad overviews of this phenomenon but I think that, unfortunately, many of the site operators interviewed did not let their guard or their web personas drop enough to gain much real insight. It's a lot easier to point a finger at someone else when questioned about your own ethics than it is to reflect on your motivations for doing something like this.

I'll start off by getting a few facts straight: We are pornographers. Many of the models you see on our site are professional sex workers of all kinds—not just models, but escorts, dominatrixes, waitresses, dancers etc. A lot of them are strictly amateur. We don't shy away from showing many different expressions of sexuality. We don't coyly sanitize to appeal to a wider audience. Our models look the way they do on and off camera. This isn't reality? I beg to disagree.

It's somewhat disingenuous to deny that our site (and many others) is pornography by using the false logic of "porn is bad, but this is okay; therefore, this must not be porn." It's downright hypocritical to make money from customers who want to see naked pictures but insist that what you do isn't sex work, or isn't pornographic, or that

it's "purely political." Pornography is politics. It's also hot, and it might get you off. Those two things aren't mutually exclusive.

We're proud to be pornographers, sex workers, punks, queers and perverts. We didn't get into this to make porn cleaner, we got into this to make punk dirtier. So get off, get out and don't be afraid to tell the world that you can be sex-positive without placating justifications.

Jack and Angela Sordid
pornforpunks.com

Three more on porn.

► PP:

Your porn article was lame for many reasons. The way you justified punk porn as being OK because it was done by punks was the biggest copout I have ever read. About 90 percent of all porn websites are DIY, and run out of someone's house. These sites are no different than the ones you featured. Is it because the girls have dyed hair and combat boots? This makes no sense to me.

If you went to any other porn site you will see these girls listed under the "teen" section. Most porn sites lump the "punk look" with the "schoolgirl look" because they dress similar. And more disturbingly, some of these "punk porn" sites have their girls dressing like schoolgirls. That just is not cool. Think about what you are conveying.

But it doesn't matter whether you are a punk porn site or not, you are still exploiting women the same way Hustler.com is. It is a simple fact. Anyone can put on a pink wig and wear combat boots, and pose naked. You don't have to be punk to do that.

And lastly it really hurts to see labels supporting these sites. Does anyone see what's going on? You are still staring at naked girls (and about one boy, who isn't

even naked, just shirtless). Naked women are still being fetishized the same way they always have. Only this time, when a punk girl is walking down the street, you can undress her with your eyes more realistically. Yeah, that's punk.

David English

PS: Don't bother with stats. I am sure these sites are viewed by mainly older men (just like any other porn site) and some punk/alternative dykes. But I highly doubt some emo dipshit is sitting there scraping his pennies together to see a girl in a Faint T-shirt topless. It's hard enough to get these boys to shell out \$10 to buy a CD, nevertheless throw down \$ for a porn membership.

► Punks,

I just wanted to say that this article on punk and porn is one of the best I have ever read. I expected it to have a superiority complex, but it really got to the heart of what makes porn common, and what makes porn good. It also was honest about how punk porn was different, and why people in the scene would like this over the average paysite. Great references, including Aaron Probe. He is definitely at the origins of this movement.

With the retooling of *Punk Planet*, articles like this shows that you have really hit the ground running.

Hainus

► Punk Planet—

I enjoyed reading the article about punk porn. I feel sex is a form of liberation and freedom. I feel that punk porn celebrates the beauty and power of all womyn.

I am a womyn who enjoys both porn and sex. Sex can be a healthy form of recreation and an alternative to drugs and alcohol. If sex is performed under proper precautions (safe-

ly & with contraceptives) sex can be a great way to bond with and understand people.

Lisa Mikoyan

Library lovers unite!

► Punk Planet,

Your article on library reform ["Liberating Information" PP52] was admirable, but I feel that you left out one of the most important parts of a library revolution: filling out order forms. This method of change can come about more easily than breaking up the bureaucracy and hierarchical system.

Most all libraries are funded greatly by local or municipal tax dollars. Because of this, members of the community are permitted to make requests for desired items. It is a rare case that the library does not put in a decent effort to fill the order. People need to take advantage of this!

For seven years now (I am 23), I have been filling up my library's CD rack with records from Matador and Kill Rock Stars, not to mention all the books and movies they have added to their collection. This gives the 13-year-old kid stuck in suburbia a shot to try something new while they glance past the rest of the status quo titles.

I come from a regular, lower-middle-class community and have not yet been shut off by the local librarians. In some cases they fail in their search, but this is a rare event. Once, I was even called up by a librarian to ask me where they could find a Blonde Redhead CD and I pointed them towards Southern Distribution. The 70-something year old librarian couldn't have been happier.

So it doesn't take a radical movement of librarians to make a change (though it helps). It's the millions of kids armed with library cards that are able to carry the flag. March on!

Dave Evad

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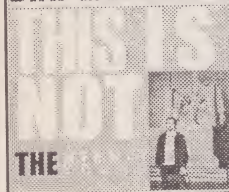
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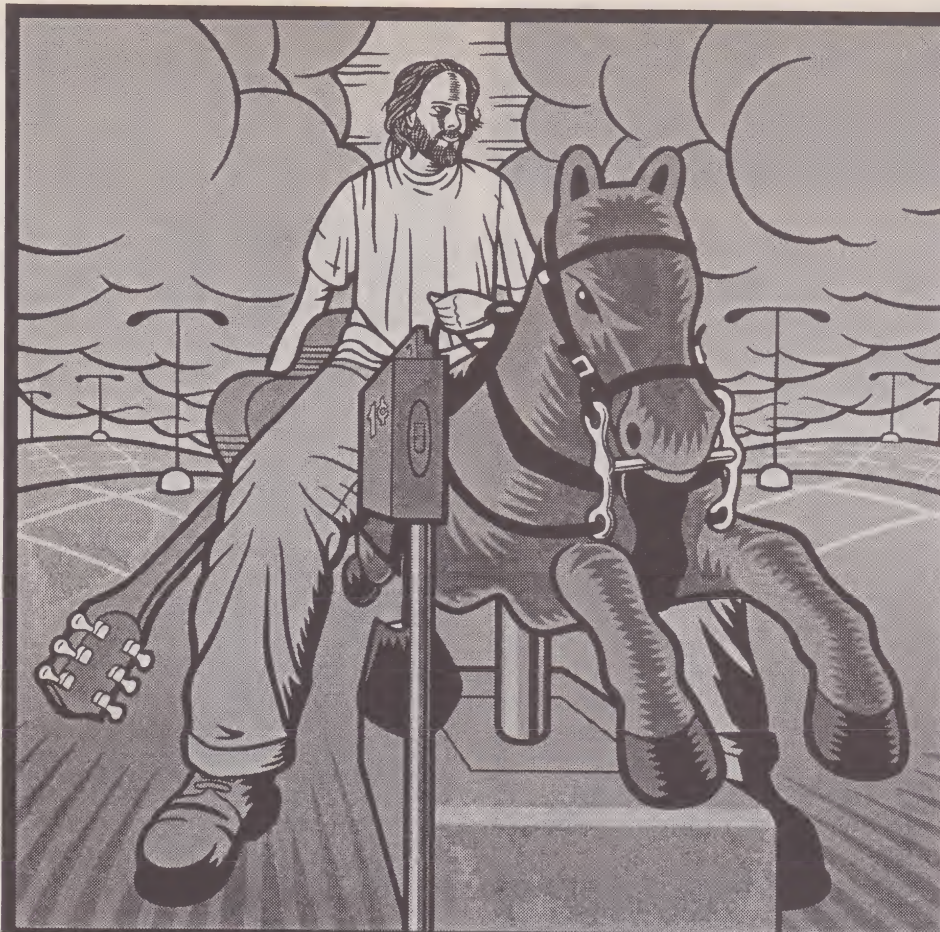
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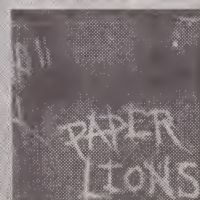


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Your monthly source for new punk rock releases NO. 35 March 2003



"Why? Perhaps... Will never know. Maybe die"

"day in Van Nuys... two men desecr"

"idlers... no one at the scene cared to comment... Perhaps fearing P... consequences of"

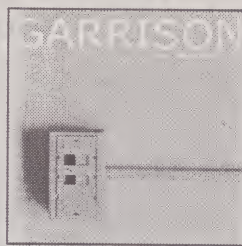


Comeback Kid

Turn It Around

Fast, in-your-face hardcore fury. For fans of Bane and Curry Oh!

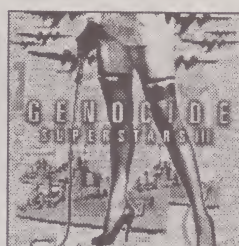
Facedown Records / FR030 Out 3/4/03



Garrison

The Model

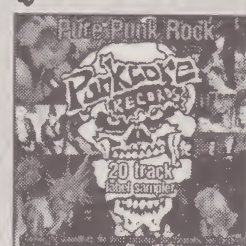
A fall on hyper-melodic anxiety attack! (for fans of Foo Fighters) Indie Recordings (via REV HQ) / IOD11 Out Now!



Genocide Superstars

Superstar Destroyer

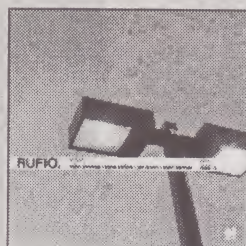
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Rufio EP

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Volume Two

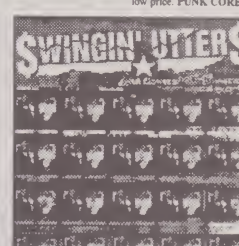
MUST OWN COMPILATION... Strong Out, Thrice, Good Riddance, Paley, Bigwig, & more! More Info: www.newschoolrecords.com, New School Records! / NSR 107-CD Out Now!



Stairwell

The Sounds of Change

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Dead Flowers, Bottles, Bluegrass, and Bones. The Utters are back with an amazing record of their cellic influenced street Punk. Fat Wreck Chords / FAT 648 Out Now!



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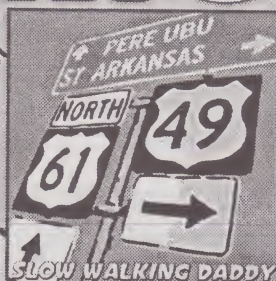


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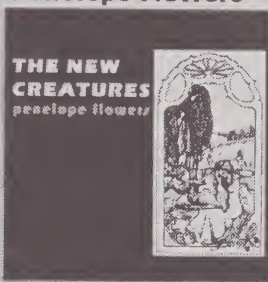
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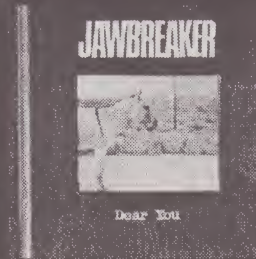
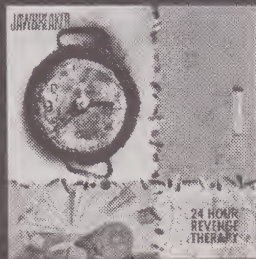
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SCANNING THE DIAL FOR LIFE ON THE MARGINS

"Soy Gay"

CHICAGO'S HOMOFRECUENCIA RADIO SHOW
DIALS INTO GAY AND LESBIAN LATINO YOUTH.

"Soy mujer, soy Latina, soy ser humano, soy lesbiana. Y que?"—*I am a woman, I am Latina, I am a human being. I am lesbian. So what?* These are the sounds of *Homofrecuencia*, the first and only Spanish language radio show in the country dealing with gay and lesbian issues, according to its founders.

Every Monday night from 9 to 10 pm, Jose, Jorge, Alix, Nancy, Alejandra, and Ivan take to the airwaves—and to the Internet—in Chicago's mostly Mexican-American Pilsen neighborhood to talk about issues both silly and serious affecting the gay, lesbian and transgender Latino communities. The show is on Radio Arte, a youth-oriented community low-power station funded by the Mexican Fine Arts Center Museum.

Any given show includes a pastiche of segments dealing with daily life, entertainment and culture in the gay community, as well as serious issues like health, hate crimes and the all-important challenge of coming out. Since the show is very youth oriented—

the DJs are in their early-to-late 20s and the target audience is teenagers—issues like health awareness and coming out are particularly important.

"The fact we're dealing with health and youth is very significant, especially with syphilis rates on the rise and HIV rates probably soon to follow," says DJ Alix Weisfeld.

"We're dealing with a younger community that's probably not as sexually active yet, so we really have a chance to make a difference as far as prevention."

On a recent show dedicated to coming out, the DJs talked about their own experiences coming out and the responses of their family and friends. Jorge Valdivia, a staff member at Radio Arte, used music and humor to tell his story of coming out when he was 17. It starts with pounding Spanish music saying triumphantly "Soy yo, soy yo" (*I am myself, I am myself*). Valdivia breaks in, in his well-modulated radio voice to say, "Soy gay." Later on he describes the moment when he knew for sure, when he encoun-

tered a man named Mario with rosy lips and skin the color of honey. "He made me feel . . ." he says in Spanish, then cuts to a sexy song with a pounding disco beat.

At 29, Valdivia is now comfortable talking about his sexuality. But when he first came out to his parents it wasn't so easy. His segment describes how he expected his mother to be more accepting than his father, but in reality his mother had a harder time dealing with it.

"She just wanted to protect me from the negative stigma and things I'd have to face," says Valdivia. "My father's reaction totally surprised me. He just said 'enjoy your life and who cares what other people think.' That was the only time I ever saw my father cry. Everyone cried except my little sister, who was 10 or 11," he adds. "She ran out of the room and then ran back in with a copy of *International Male* and asked me who I thought was cute."

While coming out as gay, lesbian, or bisexual can be hard for any youth, it is particularly difficult in the Latino community because of the heavy influence of religion, ideas about machismo

and lack of resources, *Homofrecuencia's* DJs say.

"When you're looking at the Latino community in Chicago, people are coming from small working class towns in Mexico," says Valdivia, who grew up here. "They're coming from places where the church says what's right and what's wrong and you don't ask questions. That's one of the big obstacles. And here in Little Village and Pilsen [predominantly Latino neighborhoods], you don't have the resources like you would on the north side, in Boys Town [Chicago's largely gay neighborhood]."

The show also usually includes news and entertainment related to the gay community by Tapia, biographies and interviews with lesbian artists and writers by Hernandez, and the somewhat tongue-in-cheek feature, *Donde Estan las Lesbianas*, by Weisfeld. During this segment she answers what Valdivia calls "the eternal question" at an organic market on the north side of the city.

Homofrecuencia's female DJs are planning several editions called *Lesbofrecuencia*, in which "the women will take control of the mikes and the men will have to be in our shadows,"

"I'm not ready to live in hell."

A LETTER FROM BAGHDAD.

Dear you,

This is a quick note letting you know I'm fine. The situation in Iraq is the same, which is to say not much. Those who can afford to prepare for a coming war do, by buying petrol and water paraffin for heat and lighting. Those who cannot pay, pray. The rest are busy trying to get the international media's attention on the plight of the Iraqi people and the devastation another war will bring to this country.

War preparation is above all a class issue for me. There are divisions between the upper, middle, and lower classes in their perspectives on what can be done about living through an invasion. Most of the upper echelons of Iraqi society think that Baghdad will be ablaze with street fighters beating back the Americans. The middle class—if you can call it that—have largely left it to the fates, having had little to no history of political self-determination. The poor of Iraq wants to see the invasion over with. The sanctions have



says Weisfeld. She said the show is especially important for lesbians, who Latina or not often have a hard time finding a community outside of the bar scene in Chicago.

The DJs say they have been surprised by the fact that 100 percent of their feedback has been positive. They've also gotten heavy media coverage during their short existence, with TV and print stories in major English, Spanish and gay media.

"I'm reading some of these e-mails about how we've helped people and I start getting a knot in my throat, my eyes start getting watery," says Valdivia. "That's when I know we're making a difference."

—Kari Lydersen

To listen to Homofrecuencia on the Internet, go to www.radioarte.org



"I Like Cyndi Lauper a Lot"

THE VANISHING DON'T REALLY CARE ABOUT HALLOWEEN.

You're running through a long, pitch-black hallway filled with doors—all of sudden, out crawl creepy cold hands looking to invade your body and take you to the underworld. Playing in the background? The Vanishing, a soundtrack to your worst nightmare—sort of. But really, that's just the music talkin'. This synth-erotic San Francisco trio are sweet as sin: they like cats, Pippi Longstocking, and the symphony. Somewhere Siouxsie is smiling.

There's no denying that your music is pretty dark and scary. I was wondering if secretly you love The Cardigans and dance around in pink, fuzzy sweaters.

Jessie: I hate The Cardigans. We hate Ace of Base, too. I'm into some pop music—I like Gary Numan. I like Cyndi Lauper a lot.

The Vanishing are a very visual band. How much of a role does that play in the music you create?

Jessie: You think so? Visual stuff? I want it to be, but I don't feel like it is yet.

Totally. It's all black and white. Except for the one little gray bracelet Billy has on.

Billy: I was wearing a red shirt earlier today. You missed it.

Jessie: Well, Muffin's really been obsessed with op-art for a long time. And so it's starting to control our life.

made their life already impossible, why not a war to shake things up a bit—what's there to lose? A young poor Iraqi teenage girl summed it up nicely when she said that she can't wait for the invasion so she can marry an American soldier. Desperation and creativity don't make that strange of bedfellows.

Despite the differences on how one will survive a war and how a war will be waged in the country, they all agree that if there is a war, it won't begin until *after* the invasion. It is incandescently clear that Iraq does not have the capabilities to fight the American military juggernaut. The real story of Iraq's survival will begin after the Americans come (if they come—yes there is still time and the means to stop the war; there is *always* time because tomorrow is today) and set up their puppet regime. As a media escort and veteran of the Iran/Iraq war told me, the Americans "will have an occupation in hell."

I'm not ready to live in hell. And I assume the wonderful people I've met here in Baghdad aren't ready either, regardless of how many litres of petrol they buy off the black market. I also assume that *you* aren't ready for hell either, since by all accounts, in Jordan, Syria, and Turkey the sentiment is that there will be no way to contain the resentment an unjust war will bring to the Middle East. The resentment is beginning to build into a political pro-

gram that promises nothing short of mass political insurrection, here and abroad; back home where I live and you too.

I have tried to make my work here with a certain sensitivity and language to describe another kind of Iraq existing in another kind of reality—one marred by economic sanctions, the weight of war, and American popular culture. But I can feel myself losing this sensitivity. The fear is becoming overwhelming and the space for describing the taste of lamb's head stew made with food rations and trash is disappearing.

Perhaps the time and space will come again. In the meantime (what a word) there is (still) a war to stop. I've been rereading Martin Luther King Jr.'s moving speech against the Vietnam war delivered at New York's Riverside Church in 1967 and will try to finish off one more piece of writing based on it before I return to the States. My return date is dicey at the moment but rest assured I'm well taken care of.

This turned out not to be such a quick note. I'll see you soon. Baghdad is tense and beautiful—as usual—by the way.

—Paul Chan

Paul Chan is a multimedia artist living in New York City. He is in Iraq with the Iraq Peace Team, online at www.iraqpeaceteam.org.

Billy: I think the rest of us just wear all black all of the time.

If you won a "spend a day with your favorite person" contest, who would it be with, and what would you do with them?

Jessie: Can it be someone that's dead already? Salvador Dali—we'd make some Easter eggs.

Billy: I was thinking about Bob Moog. Or that trippy guy that runs that sound thing in San Francisco . . .

Muffin: . . . The guy from Audium—we don't know his name. Audium is a round room that has 157 speakers hanging from the ceiling and this weird 70-year-old guy plays all these faders to control where the sound's coming from in the room. He does this in total pitch darkness. He's been doing it for 20 years every Friday

and Saturday.

Jessie: I changed my mind. I want to hang out with Pippi Longstocking.

Muffin: I think I'd want to hang out with the guy who built all the Hammond organs. I can't remember what his name is, but he's a real freak. He has this castle outside of Boston that is just nuts. I guess I'd probably want to drink a 40 with him.

I feel like we really bonded with that question.

Jessie: Yeah, we got really deep.

What song has made the most appearances on your mix tapes?

Muffin: I guess Jah Wobble's "Blueberry Hill".

Billy: Lately? It's like, track 5 on the Malaria CD.

Jessie: I would say Tuxedo

Moon's "No Tears," or Girlschool's "Run with the Devil". Or a Fuzzbox song. I haven't made a mix tape in so long. Are there any more questions?

Just one more.

Jessie: We don't have much experience with interviews. I tried to interview a band before—my friend's band, the Phantom Limbs—and I was so freaked out to do that that I had to drink three non-alcoholic beers beforehand.

OK, last one: What was your best Halloween costume?

Billy: I think I was Pac-Man when I was like, five. I had on a big round thing, and at one point I tripped and rolled down a hill.

Muffin: The costume I've always fantasized about having is

a skin-tight, blue, furry monster suit. Kinda like Grover.

Billy: But a real strong blue.

Jessie: I like my first costume I ever wore: I was a bat when I was three.

Sort of a prediction of what was to come.

Jessie: I used to like Halloween a lot, but I just don't really care anymore. I kind of lost interest in holidays.

So the gift of giving—you've given up on it?

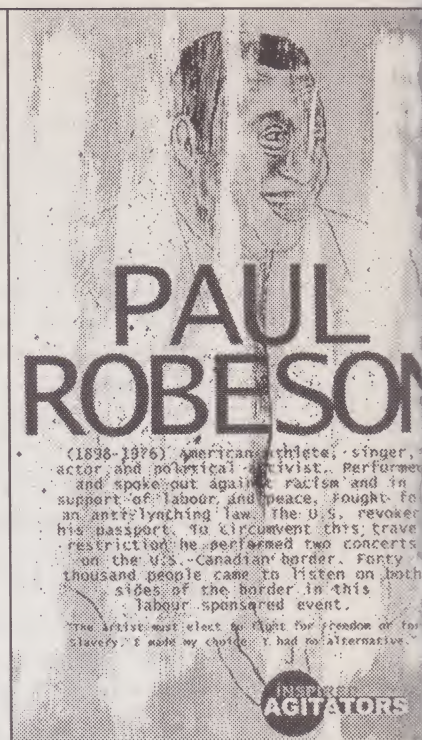
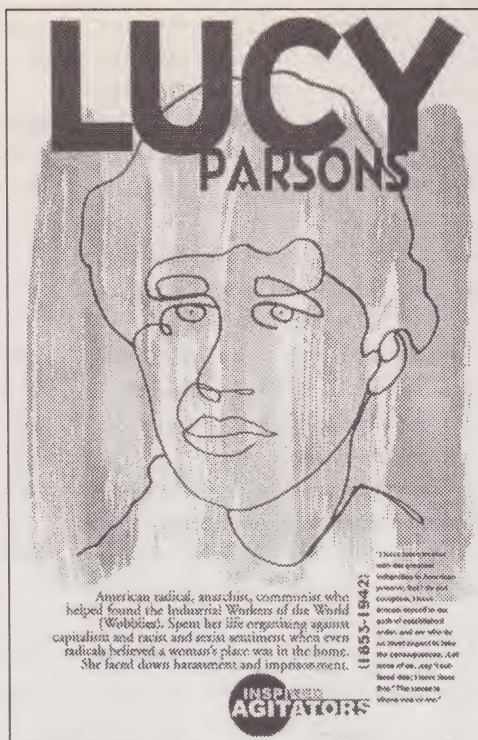
Jessie: [laughs] Yeah, I don't really give my friends presents anymore, either.

There's no giving with you, is there? It's all about take.

Billy: Can I have your pen?

—Kat Jetson

*Check out *The Vanishing* at www.the-vanishing.com*



GALLERY: Inspired Agitators

BY DAVID LESTER

"Who do the saying?"

POETRY AFTER SEPTEMBER 11TH

Amiri Baraka has done it again. Long before punk was in its nappies, this legendary Beat Generation poet and critic-turned-razor-sharp-rhetorician and general shit-disturber of the late '60s Black Arts Movement and post-'60s Third World revolutionary left was radicalizing the masses and pissing people off in apartment playhouses and basement galleries with finely-tuned prose sure to offend sense and sensibility of the day.

In a triumph of artistic merit over political considerations, and in recognition of Baraka's presence in the field of black literature, New Jersey declared him state poet laureate last August. But the controversy stirred by his September 2002 reading of "Somebody Blew Up America"—a poem written a month after the September 11th attacks—threatens not only to undo Baraka's appointment, but to eliminate the position of

poet laureate, as state legislators scramble to remove Baraka by any means necessary. Ironically—in a controversy fanned by conservative commentators, the Anti-Defamation League, civil liberties defenders, and people on the far Left—the poem has blown up in a way not even Baraka could have foreseen: republished on BET.com and magnified by major media scrutiny.

Baraka's 9/11 opus opens, "They say it's some terrorist, /some barbaric /A Rab," before settling quickly into a litany of the rudest questions of the day, started off by,

"They say (who say?) / Who do the saying / Who do the paying / Who tell the lies / Who in disguise / Who had the slaves" and so on, for quite some time.

In September, following a Baraka performance of the poem at the Dodge Poetry Festival, four lines near the end of the poem, piqued the ears of the Anti-Defamation League:

*Who knew the World Trade Center was
gonna get bombed
Who told 4000 Israeli workers at the
Twin Towers
To stay home that day
Why did Sharon stay away?*

The ADF says these

Jessie Lopez De La Cruz

At the age of 42 she became a militant United Farm Workers union organizer for the rights of migrants in California. On picket lines she has been sprayed with pesticides, run at by trucks and shot at. (1919)



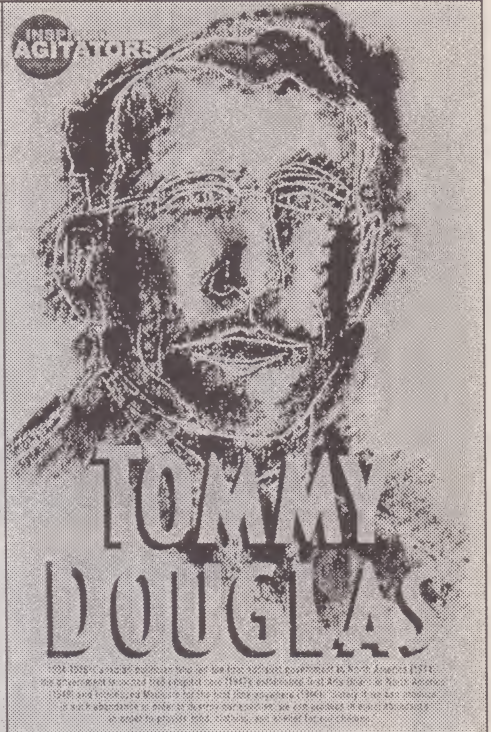
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AGAINST THE RISE OF
NAZISM. FORCED TO
FLEE, HE CONTINUED
HIS WORK IN EXILE.
(1891-1982)
"WE SAW THEN THE
INSANE END-PRODUCTS
OF THE PREVAILING
SOCIAL ORDER. AND
WENST, BUT LANGSHE,
WE DID NOT YET SEE
THAT A SYSTEM
UNDERLAY THIS INSANITY."



inspired
AGITATORS
Lester

Mecca Normal guitar player David Lester conceived of Inspired Agitators as a poster series that would "represent inspired moments of change . . . Every moment of history is embedded with obstacles that seem insurmountable. Yet, again and again, battles are won in climates of indifference, hostility, and brutality."

lines promote anti-Semitism by reinforcing the lie that Jewish workers were warned about the attacks. Baraka counters by pointing to lines that condemned the murder of Jews. They include references to the Holocaust ("Who put the Jews in ovens / and who helped them do it") and Jewish radicals ("Who killed Rosa Luxembourg, Liebnacht / Who murdered the Rosenbergs"). Jews even get their turn in the litany of demographic groups when Baraka asks "Who killed the most niggers / Who killed the most Jews" Italians,

Irish, and others also make the poem.

The interrogative mode of the poem—the fact that it provides questions, not answers—has prompted some interesting defenses of the work, including one from Rachael Kamel, a founding member of Jewish Mobilization for a Just Peace. Kamel says that she finds the four lines anti-Semitic, but the bulk of the poem is not.

"Now, you can agree with Baraka or disagree with him," Kamel argues, "you can like his poetry or dislike it, you can appreciate the militance of

his tone or find it distasteful. But all of that is a far cry from believing that he should be stripped of his honorary public position, his voice silenced and disgraced. In that context, it's hard not to understand the whole controversy as the latest salvo in the battle to brand any and all criticism of Israel as anti-Semitic."

In a late October interview with the author, Baraka suggested the Anti-Defamation League's attack is not based on his personal history—in which he's gone from writing, "Another bad poem cracking steel knuckles in a jewlady's mouth," in the 1966

poem "Black Art" to penning "Confessions of a Former Anti-Semite" for the *Village Voice* in December 1980—but political history.

"The ADL used to say that Black anti-Semitism, so called, was negligible, until SNCC and [Stokely] Carmichael and them started to support the PLO," Baraka explains. "Then we got to be worse anti-Semites when the UN voted that Zionism is a form of racism in '75. So by now, we must be screamin' anti-Semites."

But even if the Anti-Defamation League's case appears loaded and Baraka is



no prince, the legal repercussions of the dispute are significant. Because New Jersey Governor James McGreevey lacks the legal authority to fire Baraka, the state legislature has produced a flurry of bills, seeking legal ways to dismiss Baraka and to establish political control over the position. The latest, reported December 13th in the *New York Times*, would eliminate the position entirely, "with the idea that New Jersey should be supporting the arts in general, not individual artists"—an idea seemingly at odds with other US states that have poet laureates.

As legislation starts to move in the state Senate, the wrangling has only just begun. With the ADL urging supporters to denounce anti-Semitism—and Baraka urging supporters to write the Governor (who will ultimately decide his fate), telling him to defend the First Amendment—the speech will likely get hotter in months to come. At an age when most artists focus on consolidating their legacy, Baraka finds himself playing political theater—and politics—on a much larger stage. —Aaron Shuman

To read a full text of "Somebody Blew Up America" visit www.amiribaraka.com/blew.html

"Aqua-Man was my absolute favorite because he kind of sucked"

TAKING IN THE SAD SIGHTS OF *FORLORN FUNNIES*.

Paul Hornschemeier fits a lot of sadness into his brightly-colored comics. He gives you fair warning with the title of his current comic series—*Forlorn Funnies*. Hornschemeier seems to be saying right of the bat: they may look like comics, but they're not very . . . well . . . comic. But instead of getting all cheap and emo in his stories, Hornschemeier takes a different tack: he leans more towards the magical realism of Gilbert Hernandez' seminal *Palomar* comics or the slightly off-kilter world of Chris Ware. Haughty folks to compare him to, and I'm sure Hornschemeier would shrug off the affiliations, but it's company he'll be keeping soon enough.

Your comics have such a unique tone to them—almost a surreal melancholy. Why make such sad, strange comics?

I think there's two major reasons my work has been so increasingly surreal and sad. One is the nature of cartooning, in that it is an exceptionally isolating art form. For the first few years I was doing comics, I did gag strips. But after you sit at this board for days on end with only your anxieties and concerns, I think everything starts to drift towards something a lot less jovial and you start to really explore some sad things within yourself. I've found I can only sustain comedy in a more social setting and that left to my own devices I, tend to become a bit sullen. And I think that's the second reason: I'm just a

Corporate Irresponsibility

THE 10 WORST CORPORATIONS OF THE YEAR.

2002 will forever be remembered as the year of corporate crime, the year even President Bush embraced the notion of "corporate responsibility."

While the Bush White House has now downgraded its "corporate responsibility portal" to a mere link to uninspiring content on the White House webpage, and although the prospect of war has largely bumped the issue off the front pages, the cascade of corporate financial

and accounting scandals continues.

It would have been easy to compile a list of the 10 worst corporations of the year with some of the dozens of companies embroiled in the financial scandals, but we decided against that course. As extraordinary as the financial misconduct has been, we didn't want to contribute to the perception that corporate wrongdoing in 2002 was limited to the financial misdeeds arena.

little sad about the world, though I think there's a lot of beauty within it. Those combating qualities form the surrealism, I guess.

Whatever happened to superheroes?

Do you mean why are they now these horrible latex-clad Prada models? It's so strange to me because I have such an affection for these old Spider-Man and Batman stories . . . Aqua-Man was my absolute favorite because he kind of sucked, so I could really relate to him. But now he has some sort of battle axe for a hand and long Fabio hair—looking at my own hand, I realize I can no longer relate to him. Ultimately, superheroes are commercial/propaganda products and really always have been, so it shouldn't come as a surprise that they've become so ridiculous and glossy.

Not a lot of small-press comics are full-color. Why go the extra mile?

Color has a lot to do with how I write my stories and I've finally gotten to a point where I think my work can justify the price that comes with color printing. There's an emotional quality that color creates that I've always been in awe of. Growing up in rural Ohio with all these massive fields around—miles of solid color dotted with the rusted greens of combines and brown-yellows of hay bails. All of the colors were amazing and still are when I go back there. I know that all affected me significantly.

I noticed on your website you offer online comics. Do you think the online medium offers something that print doesn't, or does the market simply dictate that you've gotta give something away for free now?

The beautiful thing about the Internet is the cost, both to me and the reader. I can publish two or four color work for close to

nothing and people can read it for close to nothing. It's not that I've "gotta" give something for free, it's that I "wanna." I want to make a living off of what I do just like any artist does, but I also have a serious problem with my work not being readily accessible to anybody who might have an interest in it, so the Internet provides a great solution to that. As far as it offering something that print doesn't . . . ummm . . . headaches? Seriously, I'm very much in favor of print over screen viewing, it's really only a matter of access and cost that cause me to push the website at all.

Being an independent, small-press, self-publishing comic artist can't possibly be easy. Why stick with it?

No, it isn't easy, but it's something I can't seem to step away from. Admittedly, I think I feel some sort of responsibility to it. Like, "I can do this. I *have* to do this." It's very strange, probably unhealthy, and something I'm still trying to figure out, but I've definitely accepted the fact that I can't help producing this work in one way or another and I can't help wanting to actively help small press in general. I suppose if you're going to have an uncontrollable addiction, you could do worse, right?

So what's next?

I'm currently completing *Forlorn Funnies* #3 and working on various stories for anthologies. At the same time I'm collecting and designing work for a couple collections of my cartoons that should be published around Christmas of 2003. It should be a really amazing year, if I can keep up with it. —Daniel Sinker

Dig the new breed at www.forlornfunnies.com.

In compiling *Multinational Monitor's* 10 Worst Corporations of 2002 list, we included only Arthur Andersen from the ranks of the financial criminals and miscreants. Andersen's assembly line document destruction certainly merits a place on the list.

As for the rest, we present a collection of polluters, dangerous pill peddlers, modern-day mercenaries, enablers of human rights abuses, merchants of death, and beneficiaries of rural destruction and misery.

Appearing in alphabetical order, the 10 worst are:

Arthur Andersen, for a massive scheme to destroy documents related to the Enron meltdown. "Tons of paper relating to the Enron audit were promptly shredded as part of the orchestrated document destruction," a federal indictment against Andersen alleged. "The shredder at the Andersen office at the Enron building was used virtually constantly and, to handle the overload, dozens of large trunks filled with Enron documents were sent to Andersen's main Houston office to be shredded." Andersen was convicted for illegal document destruction,

effectively putting the company out of business.

BAT (British American Tobacco), for operating worldwide programs supposedly designed to prevent youth smoking but which actually makes the practice more attractive to kids by suggesting smoking is an adult activity, continuing to deny the harmful health effects of second-hand smoke, and working to oppose efforts at the World Health Organization to adopt a strong Framework Convention on Tobacco Control.

Caterpillar, for selling bulldozers to the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF), which are used

as an instrument of war to destroy Palestinian homes and buildings. The IDF has destroyed more than 7,000 Palestinian homes since the beginning of the Israeli occupation in 1967, leaving 30,000 people homeless.

Citigroup, both for its deep involvement in the Enron and other financial scandals and its predatory lending practices through its recently acquired subsidiary The Associates. Citigroup paid \$215 million to resolve Federal Trade Commission charges that The Associates engaged in systematic and widespread deceptive and abusive lending practices.



“Touring is hard when you have an accordion or an oboe and are playing with a hardcore band.”

LISTENING TO THE STRANGE SOUNDS OF EL GUAPO.

El Guapo has weathered many incarnations along with six years of touring, recording, and releasing music in Washington, DC. Whether it has been behind an oboe and an accordion, as a full-on rock band, or with drum machines and techno beats, they have delivered a new flavor to DC's often-stringent canon of independent rock.

What are your backgrounds in music and what drew you to playing in El Guapo?

Pete: We were going to school together and at different points we lived together.

Justin: We were part of a very small creative community at our small liberal arts college. I grew up listening to rock and playing guitar. When I got to college I started listening to jazz and experimental music and here I am today.

DynCorp, a controversial private firm which subcontracts military services with the Defense Department for flying planes that spray herbicides on coca crops in Colombia. Farmers on the ground allege that the herbicides are killing their legal crops, and exposing them to dangerous toxins.

M&M/Mars, for responding tepidly to revelations about child slaves in the West African fields where much of the world's cocoa is grown, and refusing to commit to purchase a modest five percent of its product from Fair Trade providers.

Procter & Gamble, the maker of Folger's coffee and part of

the coffee roaster oligopoly, for failing to take action to address plummeting coffee bean prices. Low prices have pushed tens of thousands of farmers in Central America, Ethiopia, Uganda and elsewhere to the edge of survival or destroyed their means of livelihood altogether.

Schering Plough, for a series of scandals, most prominently allegation of repeated failure over recent years to fix problems in manufacturing dozens of drugs at four of its facilities in New Jersey and Puerto Rico. Schering paid \$500 million to settle the case with the Food and Drug Administration.

Shell Oil, for continuing business as usual as one of the world's leading environmental violators—while marketing itself as a socially and environmentally responsible company.

Wyeth, for using duplicitous means, and without sufficient scientific proof, to market hormone replacement therapy (HRT) to women as a fountain of youth. Scientific evidence reported in 2002 showed that long-term HRT actually threatens women's lives, by increasing the risks of breast cancer, heart attack, stroke and pulmonary embolism.

What's the lesson to draw from this year's 10 worst list?

Not only are Enron, WorldCom, Adelphia, Tyco and the rest indicative of a fundamentally corrupt financial system, they are representative of a rotten system of corporate dominance.

—Russel Mokhiber and Robert Weissman

The 10 Worst Corporations list is published annually by the Multinational Monitor, multinationalmonitor.org.

Russell Mokhiber is editor of the Washington, D.C.-based Corporate Crime Reporter. Robert Weissman is editor of the Washington, D.C.-based Multinational Monitor. They are co-authors of Corporate Predators: The Hunt for MegaProfits and the Attack on Democracy.

Rafael: I started playing drums and guitar, and studied music pretty much all my life.

Pete: I took piano lessons when I was 12. I listened to jazz, but I don't have a classical background, which I guess is kind of weird. I started taking accordion lessons when I was 15 from the same guy that taught me piano. I played in bands as a young teen and most of them ended tragically—until my band now, which I like.

What was your experience like studying music in college? How did the jazz background influence where your band is now?

Rafael: I went to Wesleyan partially because there was this composer there that I admired a lot named Anthony Braxton. Pete and I studied with him and recorded with him, and as a band we were as a band influenced a lot by his teachings.

Justin: We've all been out of college now for as long as we were in it. I think I am the only one of the three of us that actually has a music degree, and I am feeling more and more disconnected from it all the time. It was very important to me at one point, though.

Pete: We still do improv though; we fudge parts sometimes.

Justin: We'll have Song A and Song B, but the segues will change. We have extended versions and we do change songs from performance to performance.

The material you recorded for the release on Dischord Records seems to mark a fairly big shift in instrumentation and approach. What was your experience putting out that record and playing shows to support it?

Rafael: When Nate and Pete left us we were drummer-less, accordion-less, and keyboard-less. That was our situation, so we learned how to incorporate technology into our music.

Playing the kind of music you do—especially with the changing styles from record to record—touring can't be easy.

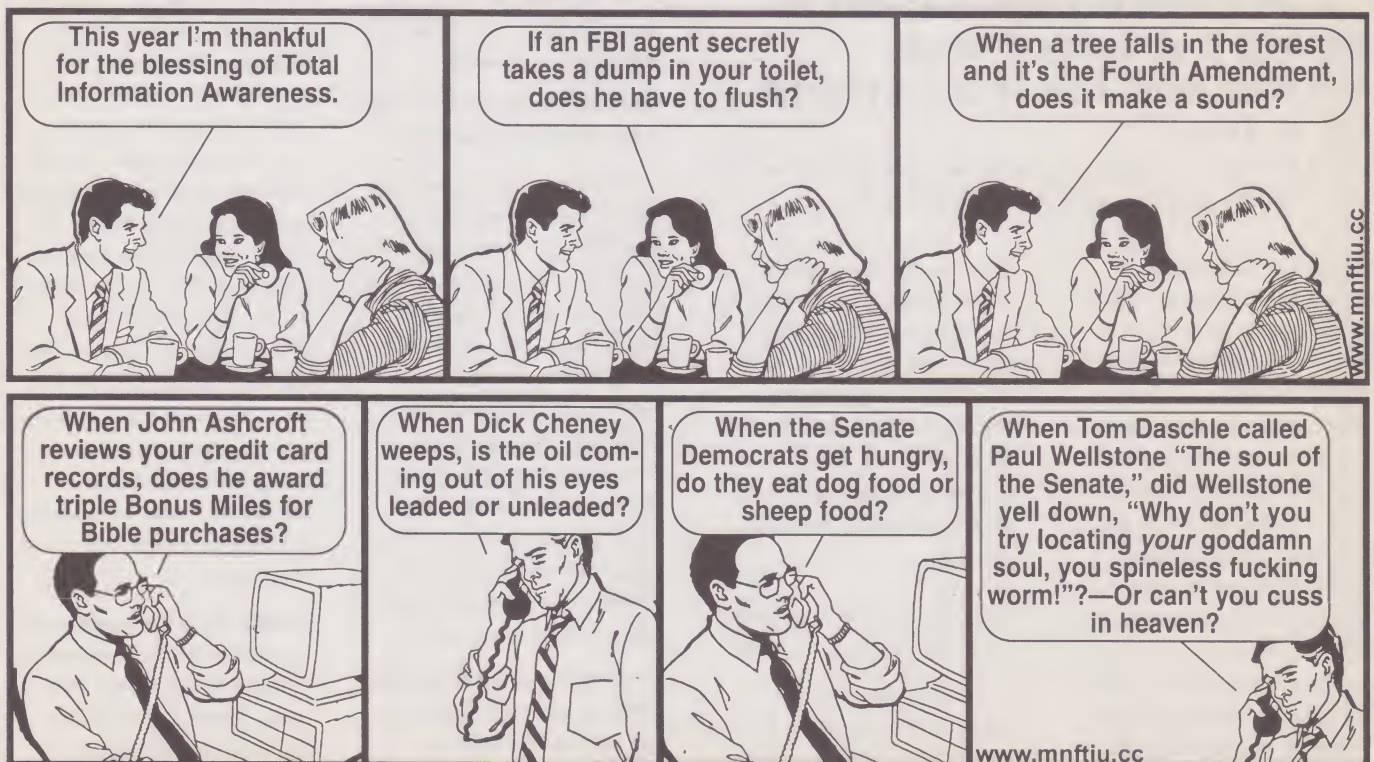
Justin: We've come out financially OK when touring with larger bands, but on our own that will be more challenging. The main thing is to have fun because this does not make sense on any other level.

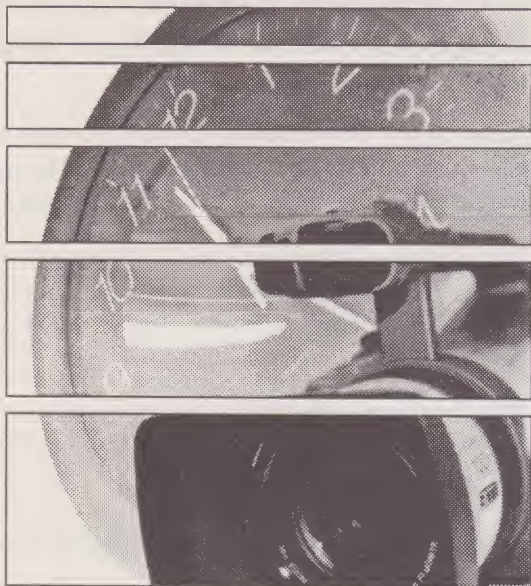
Rafael: The touring we have done in the past year has been done under the wings of guys who have more established clout: Q and Not U, The Dismemberment Plan, and Trans Am. I'm interested as we go out on our own to see how things go.

Pete: Touring is hard when you have an accordion or an oboe and are playing with a hardcore band. That isn't spreading anything—that is just annoying people. —Katy Otto

El Guapo's album super/system is available on Dischord records: www.dischord.com

Get Your War On BY DAVID REES





"The entire population is being punished and brutalized for the actions of a few."

PALESTINIAN SCHOOLS STAND IN THE CROSSHAIRS OF THE ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN CONFLICT.

The Islamic University and Palestinian Polytechnic Institution, both located in Hebron, were forcefully closed by the Israeli army in mid-January. According to official government statements, this action was taken in direct response to a twin suicide bombing in Tel Aviv that left 24 people dead and over 100 wounded, despite the fact that Israeli authorities have reported no link between individuals or student groups at these institutions and the group responsible for the recent Tel Aviv bombing. Three

more Palestinian universities including Bir Zeit and Nablus' Al-Najah, both in the West Bank, stand slated for closure.

Activist and writer Ali Abunimah characterizes the government's recent closure of universities as symptomatic of the systemic erosion of Palestinian civil rights.

Did Israel take this same sort of action during the first Intifada?

Yes. In fact, most of the Palestinian educational system was shut down for three years.

"I'm sick, I know."

TRYING TO WRAP YOUR HEAD AROUND MAKING A FEATURE-LENGTH MOVIE IN JUST THREE DAYS.

Sometimes an idea is just so insane, you've got to follow it through to completion. When I first heard about the 72 Hour Film Festival, I knew it was one of those kinds of ideas. The Festival throws down a gauntlet—can you shoot, edit, and complete a feature length film in just 72 hours—and it begs low-budget, seat-of-your-pants filmmakers to pick it up. Can it be done? Is it even possible to make a coherent, watchable 90-minute film in just three days? Fucked if I know. But that doesn't mean I'm not going to try. Are you?

I spoke with the festival's Project Director Kristie Alshaibi to get to the bottom of the insanity.

Seventy-two hours to make a feature? What are you, crazy?

Yes. The sleepless, adrenaline driven, caffeine-fueled high of this kind of pressurized filmmaking is extremely appealing to me, as the Project Director. I'm sick, I know.

Is making a feature-length film in three days something you've managed to do yourself? And if so, how did you pull it off?

72HFP #00 will be completed by Chicago filmmaker, and master of expedited movie-making, Usama Alshaibi this spring. He's

If you think of three years in terms of the development of a child, that is an eternity.

What was the reaction on the part of the Palestinian population?

One of the main features during the first Intifada was that people began organizing a clandestine educational system, holding classes in basements and homes. This too was an illegal activity and the authorities did attempt to stop these gatherings—to stop people from simply trying to educate their children. I know this is unimaginable since the right of parents to educate their children is a fundamental constitutional right here in the US.

What would you say is the fundamental difference between this and the first Intifada?

In this Intifada, we've seen the brunt of the violence falling on Palestinian children. Hundreds have been killed, thousands injured, and, in many cases, this has occurred to children going to or coming home from school. Schools are being tear gassed, shelled and bombed, or occupied. Schools are being taken over by the army and used as prisons. We've seen universities being raided, university presidents being shut out of their offices, and now we're seeing entire universities shut down once again.

Initially, didn't the Israeli government name Bir Zeit and Nablus' Al-Najah as the schools shut down, not the two in Hebron that were recently closed?

done 15-minute shorts in 12 hours, so he's pretty confident he can complete this in the same manner. He is our guinea pig.

What kind of material will you consider for inclusion? I mean, it seems like it would be fairly easy to pull a Warhol-esque 90-minutes-of-a-building type film, but is that against the rules?

The Warhol-esque approach is an obvious solution to the challenge, but we don't want obvious. If the idea is original enough and it's shot all in one take, with the camera never moving, we will of course accept it. Autonomous, unique vision is one of the main criteria for acceptance, so flat-out emulation of Warhol (or anyone for that matter) will be disregarded. That said, we will accept experimental film/video ideas, as well as narrative. Absolutely all subject-matters and styles will be considered.

Where did you get the idea for the festival?

It started out as a personal bet. My husband, Usama, and I already run one film festival - the Z Film Festival, as well as make our own films (with 2.5 features under our collective belts). We longed for something more competitive and intense. We were sitting around with friends over beers discussing the challenge. The plan to undertake this insanity was his idea. It was my idea to extend that challenge to film- and video-makers world-wide.

The official statement wasn't clear. They said that they were going to close three universities. At first they named Birzeit—often called the Harvard of the West Bank—and Najah University in Nablus, the largest university in the West Bank. Now in practice, both of those universities already have had a hard time functioning because of the intensifying military occupation of the area.

Because of checkpoints and the like?

Yes, but more so due to other factors. Most of the population is already under curfew—Nablus has been under permanent curfew for over nine months now—which means if you step outside your home,

you risk being shot dead. Many people have been shot dead for doing just that. The vast majority in the Occupied Territories, the West Bank, Gaza, and East Jerusalem, some 75 to 80 percent of the population, are under the age of 35. Israel recently issued a military order saying that no one under the age of 35 can travel outside of their home area. That means that the vast majority of the Palestinian population is banned from traveling. This particularly affects students and young people. They can't travel, can't leave their villages, their homes. Getting an education becomes an impossible task even if, formally speaking, the school or university they attend is still open. ¶ In the

Do you have any tips for filmmakers that want to try such a daunting undertaking?

There are many ways of approaching this. One day of shooting followed by non-stop editing is only one of them. Taking Mike Figgis's *Timecode* as example would be another: a well thought-out, thoroughly blocked and rehearsed script shot without ever stopping the camera. Remember that the clock doesn't start until the the first frame is captured on film or tape. Be inventive and well prepared and it should go smoothly.

What if someone gets theirs done in 75 hours? Are they shit outta luck?

Completely shit outta luck. We bend the rules for no one.

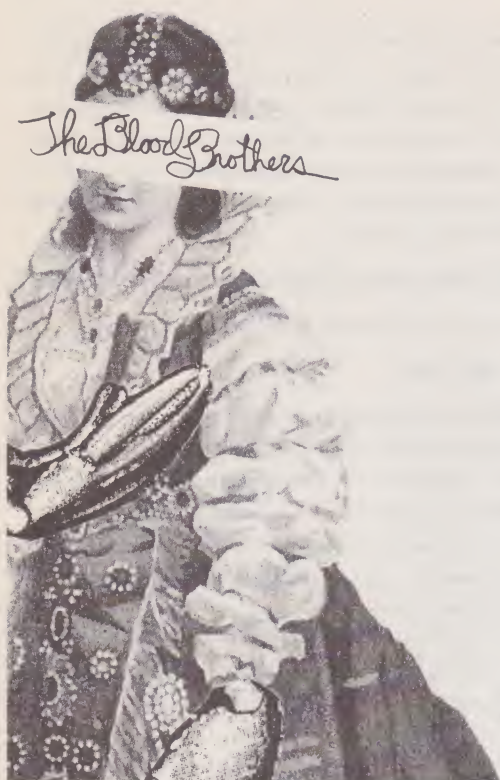
Seriously, what are you, crazy?

Well, I've seen friends go through hell participating in the recent trend of speed-shorts events—Fastforward Film Festival for example. I adore the masochism of it, I think. Feature filmmaking is already a dramatic undertaking, and this just delivers it in a concentrated high-dose form. But I also think that the present technology and accessibility of the tools for creating movies makes this sort of thing completely reasonable. It can be done. And if it can be done, why not do it? —Daniel Sinker

For more information, including rules and an entry form, about the 72 Hour Film Festival visit www.72hfp.com. Deadline for proposals is March 28th.

case of the two closed colleges in Hebron, the authorities have claimed that these places are "nests of terror"—to use their lurid language. I am looking into claims that alleged suicide bombers attended these two universities, but so far the only link I have found is the fact that one of the alleged bombers attended a tile-making class at one of the universities. And this is a justification for closing the university? It's guilt by association. In any university, you have the entire population represented. The entire population is being punished and brutalized for the actions of a few. —Anjali Gupta ©

Ali Abunimah post his writing online at www.abunimah.org.



The Blood Brothers

... Turn, Round, Island, Turn

The Blood Brothers follow up last year's acclaimed *March On Electric Children* with a delivery of spastic but catchy indie/noise rock'n'roll driven by manic dual vocals and dissonant yet melodic riffs, charged with the fury, energy and revolutionary spirit of fellow status quo disturbers REFUSED and AT THE DRIVE-IN, but possessed of a delivery that is all The Blood Brothers.

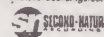
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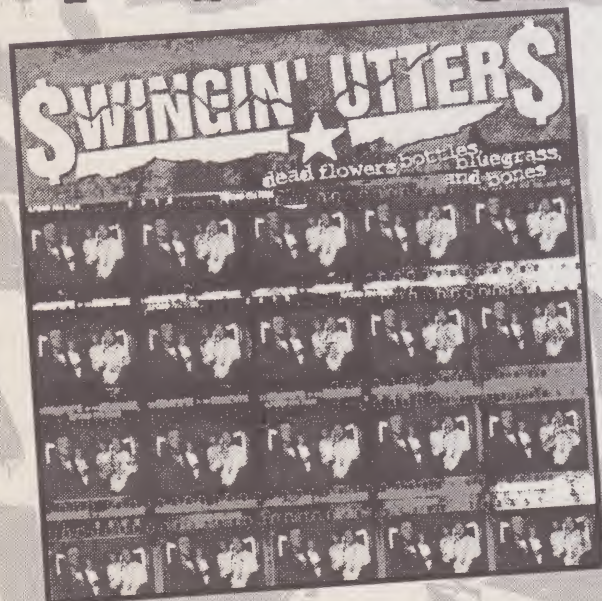
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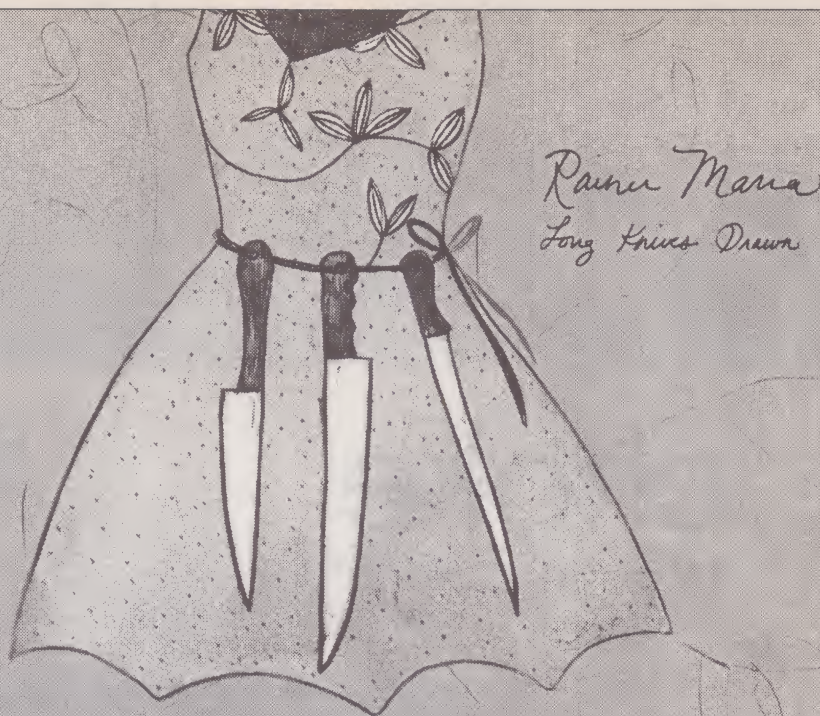
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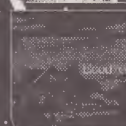
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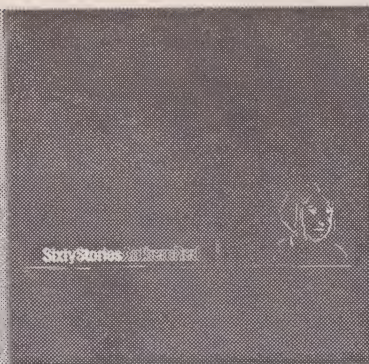
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It's natural to attack yourself. I don't think I sound crazy saying that. But there's also the other half of me—the half that is trying to survive that voice by writing these songs. It's sort of like the angel and the devil sitting on my shoulder, arguing with each other.

I don't think I'll ever figure out Tim Kasher. As an artist, he's incredibly complex: smart, articulate, and filled with passionate ideas about love and lovelessness, happiness and sadness, frustration and inspiration. The new record from his band Cursive is called *The Ugly Organ* and it is loosely concerned with the male organ found a few inches from a man's waist. At least that's what I think it's about—but, truth be told, I'm not really sure. Like I said, I'm not very good at figuring the guy out.

Here, though, are some things I know for sure: Kasher was born in Omaha, Nebraska some 28 years ago. Aside from a few minor relocations—the most significant being an eight-month stay in Portland, Oregon a few years back—Kasher has lived in Omaha his entire life, making music with his friends far from the pulse-taking hipsters found in your larger metropolitan areas.

Because of this, the bands he's played in have gone generally unnoticed. There was Slowdown Virginia, a relatively groundbreaking act that played the sort of dramatic, emotionally-tinged rock you can currently nab while shopping at the mall. No one outside of Nebraska really paid attention to the band, though, and after just one album, 1993's *Dead Space*, Slowdown Virginia called it a day. For a while he played guitar in Commander Venus, a band that has taken on mythic proportions in the Omaha scene—although this has little to do with Kasher and everything to do with the band's frontman: a 15-year-old kid named Conor Oberst who, in the years since, has gone on to become one of the underground's most accomplished songwriters through his work

with Bright Eyes (Oberst tosses it right back to Kasher, however. "Tim literally taught me how to play music," he told me once).

In 1995, Kasher started Cursive. They put out an album on Crank! (1997's *Such Blinding Stars For Such Starving Eyes*) and an album on Saddle Creek (1998's *The Storms Of Early Summer: Semantics Of Song*), and perhaps more than any other band Kasher had played in, Cursive seemed to be on the verge of something.

But right then Kasher broke up the band, got married, moved to Portland, and started a new life. Kasher has often said to me that, in life, things never really work out. This was certainly true in Portland where his marriage fell apart, his outlook turned bleak, and he spent most of his time manning the counter at a bookstore in a nearby mall. I could tell you more, but I'd never do this better than the third Cursive record already does. Titled *Domestica* and released upon Kasher's return to Omaha in 2000, it's an album of deep burns and aggravated odes to divorce, debt, and failure. In short, it's an album about how things never really work out. Well, maybe.

It's just as much about that as *The Ugly Organ* is a concept album about being a man—which it isn't. At least not to Tim. Like all great artists, he's begun to believe that his work is best defined by his audience's interpretation of it. So, I'll leave it up to you to decide. The only thing I will say about the record with any degree of certainty is that it's the best album of Kasher's lengthy career—a difficult, sometimes, disheartening listen that only gets better when you find yourself trapped between its blurred lines.

Interview by Trevor Kelley





cursive

I think this may shock you, but the other day I came to the conclusion that this is sort of an "up" record.

Really?

Yeah.

I guess that's not that weird [laughs]. That makes sense.

To you maybe. I don't know how many people would hear a line like "save me from the wreck I'm about to drown in," and consider it a real warm gesture.

Yeah, but everyone does that. You can pick apart anything, you know? People could spend years wondering why they can't perfect their toast; they could spend years wondering why one side of the bread is darker than the other. Like all those other people, that's what I do, but I pick at me. ¶ On this record, I think I point the finger so often at myself that I eventually point the finger at myself for doing so. It may be one of the lesser clichés—"self-reflective" art or whatever you want to call it—but it's still there. I guess I wanted to identify that. I know what I am doing, but I also wanted people to know that I know what I'm doing. Why I became interested in that, I don't know. It's probably something I don't even recognize at this point.

Tell me about the title *The Ugly Organ*. It isn't just referencing the fact that you're playing an organ on the album. There's a bigger idea there, right?

Yeah, there is. We went into the recording of this record with the title in mind—so we sort of bound it by using the organ, symbolically. The title *The Ugly Organ* comes from the organ you use to express from.

Like your heart?

Well, that would be one of them.

Wait, are you saying that, on a man, it's actually a bit lower?

I'm not saying anything [laughs]. It is based on sexuality, but that doesn't mean it has to mean that to you. I don't want this record to be such a strong-handed, conceptual record. In the past we've written things that we wanted to be more specific, but now we are trying to understand that it means one thing to us but it doesn't have to mean the

same thing to everyone else. How it affects you or what it means to you is just as important. I don't usually feel like that—I usually feel like things are more cut-and-dried. But, really, this record comes down to what you think personally. ¶ People always ask me if we make concept albums—and I always say that I don't understand what record *isn't* a concept record. Why shouldn't songs relate with other songs when they're put on the same album? Songs are just like short stories and when they're put together they create a whole. That's not conceptual.

Still, there are themes to it. Something I hear quite a bit on the record is this idea of playing songs from your heart, and how that can wear on you. I'd even say that the process of playing sad songs is wearing on you a bit. Is that fair to say?

Yeah, that's fair. I think the album is of two parts. There's one part that has to do with the sort of self-mockery that comes out when you're trying to create something—that dark voice inside your head that tries to defeat whatever it is you're doing. I think a song like "Art Is Hard" is about that mockery. That's why we named the song that: it's a joke. I still take putting an album together seriously, so I would never say it's entirely a joke, but it is nice to be sarcastic and biting here and there. All that really is, is that aggravated voice inside us all. It's that same voice that tries to chop down anything we work at or succeed at or pursue to make ourselves feel better. I think it's natural to hear that voice. It's natural to attack yourself. I don't think I sound crazy saying that. But there's also the other half of me—the half that is trying to survive that voice by writing these songs. It's sort of like the angel and the devil sitting on my shoulder, arguing with each other.

How old are you now?

I'm 28.

Do you ever fear you're growing old with music prematurely?

Well, I am getting a little bored with music—I can admit to that. But I wouldn't say that it's premature. I was given a guitar at 14 and two years later I was in my first band. My family 'all said, "That's

really neat that you're in a band, but it won't last." I think by their standards 18 is when music should have gotten old for me. I really do think that some people are songwriters. I think that's what I am, but I'm not *completely* sure. I want to do other stuff, too.

Like what?

This is entertainment. If you circle that back to me, that makes me an *entertainer*. I don't think *any* of us want to be just that. I want to express my ideas in a much bigger way, whether that is with film or with writing. I still think everyone disrespects a pop song. I think I appreciate them—I love the bands that I love and I love the songwriters that I love—but I know my mom would much rather sit at the supper club and tell people that her son is a writer as opposed to a songwriter.

At what point in your life have you felt ready to walk away from music?

I think I've felt that way a few times. The first time was when we broke up Slowdown Virginia and I moved to Lincoln to go to school. That was the one time I really tried to walk away from it. I really felt like, "Fuck it, I don't care." At that time I really didn't know what I wanted. It wasn't a degree. I didn't know what it was. There was another time when I left Omaha to go to Lawrence, Kansas—again so that I could go to school. I think I felt it then too. I felt that way when I moved to Portland a bit, as well. I still wanted to do music, but I don't know . . . I was confused in *so many* ways at that point. I think I always thought I'd play music, but I was pretty unsure. That was a point in my life where I thought I had to move on. I just *had* to.

Why did you feel that way?

Because we only get to be alive for so long, that's all. The success that I have sometimes feels like a trap that I can't get out of. I've been doing this for a long time now. I've been playing in bands for 14 years—that's half of my life. It's not that I don't love doing it. I feel bad saying, "Oh, I wasted my time having fun and getting drunk with my friends every day." I *am* lucky that I can have had 14 years of writing songs and being excited about it. But I would love it if

someday I moved on to other forms of art and expression.

Are you worried that music is all you know?

No, that's not the worry. What really worries me is that I'll become the accountant that spends 15 to 20 years crunching numbers at his desk and then 20 years later he looks up and wonders, "What did I do?" I tour so much that if I do this year after year I'm going to look back and think, "What did I do? I sat in a van and played some shows." I don't want to be on my deathbed saying that.

How often do you think about quitting?

A lot. Right now I'm doing music that is true to myself and that's great, but that's also the trap that I'm in. I've been accused of not wanting to do something once I know I can do it well. That's the reason I call music a trap: I feel like music was something that I came across, did pretty well, and now I'm stuck with it. I think that's why I've done Cursive for so long.

Do you ever fear that, by talking like this, people will see you as having a *huge* chip on your shoulder?

I suppose they probably do. But I don't see myself as having a chip on my shoulder. It's just being overly critical or overly abusive.

For me, as I get deeper into my twenties, I've begun to notice this idea that people—very young people—are getting disinterested or untrusting in this music or this community just because they've been around it for what *feels* like an awful long time. That aging—where you become old and over it—is so quickly accelerated in punk rock. I often look around at my friends and realize we've all grown up way too soon. We shouldn't be over *music*. Music is an incredible thing. I don't think we should be over it now—if ever.

That's great to hear you put it that way. I guess I am a bit jaded by it.

Jaded?

Yeah, I think so. There is a beauty to innocence, to still believing in what you do. It's funny: I was talking to someone a month ago who said that they think really pure music can only come from innocent musicians. The best music can only come out

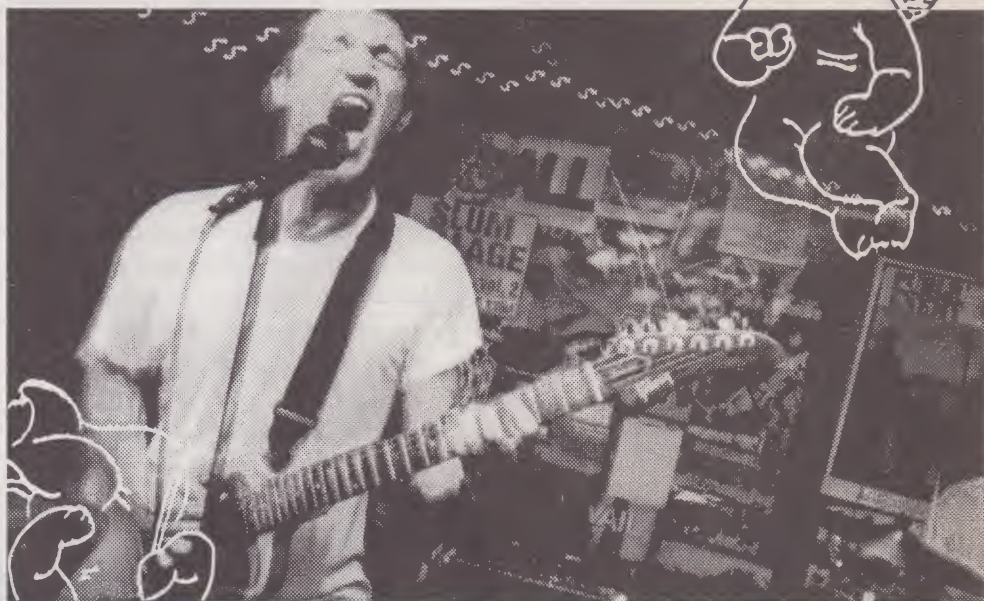
when you want it badly. I can see that. I can't be innocent anymore, so I think I'd rather be jaded. When you're jaded, you have your finger on everything and you know what's going on and you can figure it out from there.

What have you figured out?

A hundred thousand things, I think. Being jaded doesn't have to be a negative thing. It's just a way of being aware of the fact that everything is fucked up—and, from there, feeling better because you know it. I got

rather be excited about it then be brought down by it. Even if I'm not truly excited about it, I'd *rather* be excited about it. ¶ I don't want to have a lot of bad words for music, though. It does feel good to achieve things you've worked hard at—but I don't know if that truly makes you happy. That's the biggest cliché, isn't it? To think "success will make you happy"? There's always that aggravated voice that will come along and try to defeat it. Like last night we played in Chicago at the Fireside Bowl and

What really worries me is that I'll become the accountant that spends 15 to 20 years crunching numbers at his desk and then 20 years later he looks up and wonders, "What did I do?" . . .



. . . I tour so much that if I do this year after year I'm going to look back and think, "What did I do? I sat in a van and played some shows." I don't want to be on my deathbed saying that.

this fortune cookie once that said, "The more you learn, the less you believe." I think that's true.

It's weird to talk about these failures and frustrations—especially because you seem so happy to be doing this band right now. Based on our other conversations, you seem so excited to be doing Cursive.

There's so much in art and life that I try to be as excited about as possible. I'd still

it was really, *heavily*, sold out and it was just a great crowd and that was the first time we've really done that on our own. But I still got up onstage and I didn't know what the crowd was thinking. I *still* wondered if they were all judging me. I wondered if half of them were thinking, "These guys are supposed to be the shit, but I don't think they are!" [laughs] I've always thought that. I don't feel any different, really. ©



ERIC

“Wherever I go I get the biggest drum I can find,” says artist Eric Drooker. “I like to be out there making a lot of noise.”

“Noise” doesn’t just refer to the sound from a drum for Drooker. It refers to his images of snarling police dogs, oppressed homeless people, brave squatters, beautiful women and vicious law enforcement officers that pop up in cities across the country on posters, fliers, stencils, and even on magazine covers.

A lifelong resident of Manhattan’s Lower East Side until his recent move to San Francisco, Drooker says he is “obsessed” with fighting police brutality, displacement, “economic cleansing,” the prison industrial complex, and other political issues.

During his long involvement in the anti-gentrification battles in the Lower East Side, Drooker’s artwork was used as a form of communication and inspiration. The ‘80s and early ‘90s on the Lower East Side could be considered one of the defining battles against gentrification in the country, including a bloody struggle for control of Tompkins Square Park, a long-time refuge for the homeless, street artists, and musicians which was cleared out and fenced off at the behest of developers. Drooker’s work was used in posters, fliers, zines, and newsletters to inform people about the underground battles going on between the haves and have-nots and to stir them to action.

Along with a pervasive presence in New York City, Drooker’s work has popped up on

lampposts and walls around the world, in zines across the country and in community and non-profit groups’ fliers and newsletters. His artwork has graced album covers of bands both tiny and huge and he has been featured in magazines as diverse as *The New Yorker*, *The Village Voice*, *Spin*, and *Maximum Rock ‘n’ Roll*. He has also worked on the influential comic magazine *World War Three Illustrated* and had a number of books published, including the seminal graphic novel *Flood! A Novel in Pictures*.

In late 2002 he completed a book tour for his latest work, *Blood Song: A Silent Ballad* and he continues his art and activism from the Bay Area.

Interview by **Kari Lydersen**

All artwork by **Eric Drooker**

DROOKER

ART IS MUCH MORE THAN SELF-EXPRESSION, BUT IS
AN ACTUAL LANGUAGE—A UNIVERSAL LANGUAGE



In a nutshell what is the theme of *Blood Song*? How is this different from your past novel in pictures, *Flood!*?

The theme of my latest book is global expansion run amok—with its techno-economic and military forces on a warpath of self-destruction, all seen through the eyes of a young girl. It's a coming of age story, told without words, relying solely on pictures to tell the tale. *Flood!* was my first attempt at telling a story by purely visual means. ¶ Whereas *Flood!* was largely autobiographical, about a city dweller with his cat living in the last days of the 20th century, *Blood Song* is about a girl and her dog living in the jungle, in an uncertain time. In the book's opening pages, we follow the girl going down to the

river, to fetch some water. When she discovers blood flowing between her legs, we realize that she is no longer a girl—but a young woman who is about to embark on an epic journey. Upon her return home, she notices helicopters landing in her village, and, to her horror, witnesses the massacre of her family, and the immolation of her home. She is chased through the jungle by soldiers, but manages to outrun them. At the edge of the forest, she finds a small rowboat in which she escapes from her native island—which goes up in flames—and rows across the ocean...ultimately landing on the shores of a 21st Century metropolis.

How does this fit into globalization, the war on terrorism and US intervention in Latin America?

"Globalization" is really just a modern buzzword for good old-fashioned imperialism. It's simply the continued theft of the world's raw materials and labor by a minority of wealthy, predominantly European nation-states. In *Blood Song*, we follow the adventures of an indigenous woman through her native landscape, a tropical landscape, which is soon over-run by foreign interests, who eventually cut down every tree in the forest. Since no words are used, we aren't quite certain where in the world we are. Is this Vietnam or Indonesia? It could well be somewhere in Latin America, with its ever-present death squads terrorizing the peasant population. The question is: Who's arming and training these paramilitary death squads? Throughout the last century, the US government has





CREATIVE PEOPLE NEED TO QUESTION HOW THEY MAY BE PROSTITUTING THEIR TALENTS—AND WHO THEIR PIMP IS

supported some of the world's most brutal dictatorships, in the name of "fighting communism at all costs." Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, and more recently of the Twin Towers, the mission has shifted to "fighting terrorism at all costs."

What role do you think the artist has in society, and particularly right now, in the midst of the war on terrorism and imminent war with Iraq?

The artist's role in society is a subtle one. Artists possess the ability to perceive reality in ways that most people are oblivious to. Artists are analytical by nature. They see the world with a special kind of x-ray vision, which enables them to construct aesthetic works, layer by layer. I feel that art is much more than self-expression, but is an actual language—a universal language with which one can communicate. The simple act of self-expression as an end in itself, like jerking off—a pleasurable, yet temporary relief of pressure—is ultimately unsatisfying. Its too solitary, too self-absorbed. Great art communicates to the masses, utilizing the vivid details of common experience, and transforms them—condenses them—into works which enable people to see through society's endless layers of bullshit: its lies, obfuscations, official myths, propaganda. Art cuts to the quick. It cuts to the chase. The truth can be funny as hell, and make

you laugh out loud; but it can also make you cry like a baby . . . it's beautiful.

The technique you used to create the images in *Blood Song* is similar to your other work—and wholly unique in its own right. How do you make your work?

All of the images in *Blood Song* were created on scratchboard, a similar technique to woodcut or linocut. The ink is already on the board, and you are actually removing it with a blade. It's a type of engraving process, which enables the artist to cut clean, sharp, angular marks directly, without having to print backwards as in most graphic techniques—like etching, lithography, or woodcut. I first began working in scratchboard years back, when I was creating editorial illustrations and political cartoons for various newspapers. Scratchboard drawings have a strong, graphic quality which always reproduces well on cheap newsprint—even when reduced down to postage stamp size. Also, the tactile and visceral sensation of drawing with a knife has always appealed to me. In *Blood Song*, I then added soft layers of watercolor on top of the hard, jagged marks. This painted layer gives the book its ethereal, mist-infused atmosphere.

You've moved to the Bay Area after a lifetime in New York City. What similarities and differences have you seen between daily life and

political issues going on in those two places?

Both New York City and the San Francisco Bay Area are the most politically progressive regions in the US. I travel back and forth frequently, always trying to keep one foot planted on either coast. Both places have long traditions of social activism, labor struggles, and, of course, artistic innovation. New York is on a vastly larger scale, obviously—nothing can begin to compare to the non-stop, frenetic quality of New York. Which is why I've finally set up my studio here in Berkeley. It's got a slower pace and more oxygen. I like oxygen. Growing up on Manhattan Island felt like growing up in a can of sardines—claustrophobic, metallic, oily, too much salt! Presently, the Bay Area is in the vanguard of the anti-war movement. Local elected officials have boldly run on progressive, anti-militarist platforms, and were just re-elected by a landslide. Over 100,000 marched in San Francisco last month, chanting "No Blood for Oil!"

Your art has always been connected with on-the-streets activism. In fact, your book *Street Posters & Ballads* was intended to be used as sort of a toolkit for making stickers and posters for progressive event organizing. What made you decide to do that?

Street Posters & Ballads was an anthology of political graphics I'd originally created as



OPERATION NOBLE EAGLE

poster art, which were plastered on walls throughout my neighborhood—the Lower East Side of Manhattan. I decided to publish the collection as a book after realizing that virtually all of the images transcended the local issues I had been illustrating: real estate speculation, AIDS, police brutality, jail solidarity and organized resistance. They were familiar scenarios in cities across the US. ¶ The concept of the book was to share these hard-hitting graphics with activists throughout the country, so they could be freely reproduced, without any hassle or concern over copyright. My policy is spelled out in the book's copyright page: "Progressive, non-profit, activist groups may freely lift, reproduce and disseminate contents as they see fit . . . Status quo opportunists who reproduce contents without permission will get their asses sued off." With the advent of the World Wide Web, a lot of my work is now on line, much of it in high-resolution, print-quality form, for easy downloading by activists. The site has been a great resource; I see my images used

all over the world as posters, fliers, and in underground publications.

I think part of why your work is easily appropriated and re-contextualized by activists is because it is able to be so evocative without using words.

Pictures are the earliest form of writing. As a species, we've been at it for over 40,000 years! Images speak to us on a primal level. We view and interpret them as children, long before society teaches us how to read and write. They are our native tongue. As an image-maker, I've set out to create epic tales, adventure stories, full-length modern novels—written in the ancient language of pictures. My books can be "read" by anyone, regardless of age or background. There's no language barrier.

How would you describe the state of political public art today?

I've seen a dramatic shrinkage of public space in our cities in recent decades. In New York and San Francisco, which have long, vibrant traditions of public gather-

ings and street oratory, there has been a gradual, yet persistent, crackdown on political and cultural expression. Parks are closed at night and rigorously curfewed. People congregating in groups are ordered to "break it up" and "keep moving" by the police. More and more, cities are taking on the appearance of shopping malls and yuppie theme parks. The vibe is unmistakably: "If you don't got the bucks, Beat it!" ¶ Socially-conscious artists continue, however, to make their voices heard, and street posters and stencils continue to be a viable means of communicating on lamp posts and walls from coast to coast . . . Of course, we need more, much more enlightened art, with thought-provoking content out there. *Infinitely* more! Right now, all I see are occasional sparks of consciousness, here and there. ¶ I've long maintained that actually, we are surrounded by political art everywhere we look. Don't forget: advertising billboards, signs and commercials, which bombard us at every turn were all designed by artists who went to art school. But what is the political message of all this art? Consume . . . Be Cool . . . Aloof . . . Be Sexy . . . Self-Obsessed . . . Get Drunk! Creative people need to question how they may be prostituting their talents—and who their pimp is. ©

Every studio engineer fantasizes about the perfectly mastered recording, one in which the highs, lows and the midrange sparkle in perfect harmony. Such is the music of former Karate bassist Eamonn Vitt, only in the emotional realm. If Vitt feels it, you can hear it, from the expressiveness of his spacious arrangements, to his incredibly heart-felt—yet cliché-free—lyrics.

Between 2002's *Old Wave, New Ride* EP, and his recently released 2003 full-length, *Deserted Music*, this 30-something New York physician has managed to produce a distinctive voice and burgeoning body of work which sidesteps the overproduced melancholy of Elliot Smith and outsider folksiness of Will Oldham in favor of something that can only be compared to acoustic hardcore (though more in spirit than actual form).

This conversation took place in my apartment in San Francisco while Vitt was in town, checking out the residency program at the University of California. What transpired is a remarkably frank post-burrito conversation about Vitt's work, his politics, and how growing up punk led him into the medical profession.

Interview by Joel Schalit

Photos by Courtney Utt

How would you account for the distinction between your solo work, and the music you played in Karate? I assume it isn't just attributable to a change in amplifiers.

Obviously the style is quite different from Karate. I guess that reflects what I've been listening to the last couple of years.

When I first heard last year's *Old Wave, New Ride* EP, I couldn't help but think that it must have been influenced by Bob Mould's solo work. It particularly comes across in the way you harmonize.

Yeah, sure. Mould's a great songwriter. I love Hüsker Dü and Sugar too. But a lot of my influences also comes from Irish music, in the sense that a lot of it is very melancholy. A lot of my friends listen to my work and go "Woah, you seemed like such an optimistic, happy person." The music is definitely darker than they expected. But that's kind of the reason why I write music—to express those kinds of emotions.

What would you say your music is about then?

A lot of my songs are basically open letters to certain people whom, for whatever reason, I cannot state such things to their face. It's an attempt at some sort of therapy. Karate was obviously a lot different. My solo work is definitely a progression for me, personally. It's something I have to do now in order to be mentally healthy and fulfilled.

Do you find the time to balance your artistic work with your medical career? Wasn't that one of the reasons why you left Karate?

I've been really damn busy my whole life, the past 10 years in particular. There's been some gaps where there's been less time than others. But when I'm busy, I tend to get the most done. ¶ I moved to New York about six years ago after some really big changes in my personal life. I felt like I was starting out with a blank slate, it



Eamonn Vitt



was great. I brought music back into my life in a completely different way than when I had been living in Boston. I had the space for it, so I could focus on it and give it attention.

What changed?

I became more disciplined about it. When I first started medical school, I wouldn't pick up my guitar for four or five months at a time because I just didn't have the time or emotional energy. But sometimes I'd work 18 hours and come home and just *have* to play the guitar. If I didn't play for an hour or two, I wouldn't be able to go to sleep and I'd be useless the next day. So making music again was almost a necessity.

You've often said that you hold the '80s DC scene very close to your heart. What importance does it hold for you at this stage in your life?

A lot of the reasons I'm doing music now and what I'm doing in my life have a lot to do with the influence of the early DC

scene. I had some *incredibly* transformative experiences going down there and seeing what was going on. Whether it was shows Positive Force was putting on, or Fugazi playing benefits for an AIDS clinic in the city, all of these entities seemed to be concerned with bigger things going on their city. To me, that is where my conception of punk rock and what it really is came from.

You're speaking about punk in an ideological as well as a musical sense.

Yes, equally. I grew up outside Philadelphia and when I was in high school, I'd drive three hours down to DC. When I went there, I would hear music that was emotionally communicative, powerful and beautiful, and was also trying to do progressive social and political things in such loaded surroundings. The fact that the two could be mixed in that kind of context was incredibly moving.

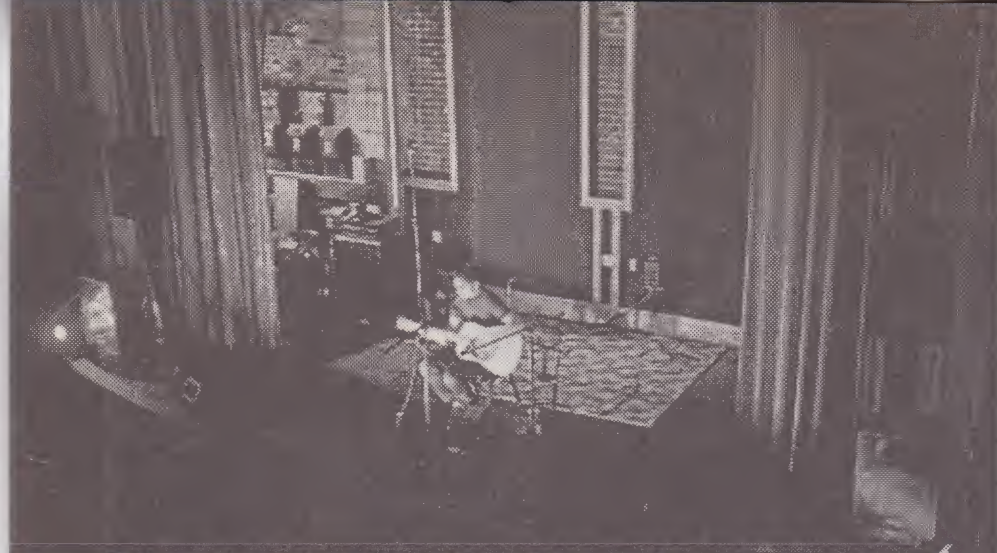
Two Reagan administrations ought to ideally inspire that kind of political poetry in any capi-

tol city community. I took note of it all from Portland, and was extremely fond of bands like Beefeater, but felt positively alienated by the straightedge side of things.

I was never a straightedge kid, but I was impressed with how incredibly productive these people were being with their time. They had big ideas—important ideas. There were also a lot more women in the scene as opposed to hardcore scenes in other cities, and I thought that was really cool. Everyone seemed to be really intelligent and passionate about what they were doing. It was incredibly inspiring, because it really brought music and politics together in an amazing way.

Did seeing that happen—music and politics coming together like that—help you decide you wanted to become a doctor?

Absolutely. In medicine, the values that are supposed to dominate how you live and how you practice are supposed to be professional values that are insulated from the



Punk was always about changing the world to me – about making it a better place.



capitalist culture around you. Music is like medicine, to the degree that a label like Dischord, functions entirely outside of mainstream entertainment industry values. Many other really great independent record labels and bands have values that are explicitly extra-capitalistic too. They have to pay their rent and buy their food, but money isn't the basis of the values that drive them. It's really kind of a deep thing if you think about it. I took it for granted then, and did not realize how much it would inform how I thought and how I approached art, medicine, and extra-capitalistic endeavors in general. Like I said, the first benefits I went to in DC were for health clinics. ¶ I've worked really hard to stick to those values, which are outside of the mainstream. Socialized medicine is one. How can you *not* be concerned with the fact that there are starving kids in your neighborhood? How can *that* not be your number one priority? Unfortunately, medicine functions in a market economy, which is ludicrous. Healthcare should be a human right. To approach medicine from within a market system is *ridiculous*. When you're sick and you're about to die, you don't compare prices. It's not like deciding between Delta and TWA. Consumer choice doesn't apply to life and death circumstances. ¶ Punk was always about changing the world to me – about making it a better place. Reading about activist physicians, like Che Guevara, Albert Schweitzer, and doctors who did a lot more than just listen to heartbeats and diagnose flus, who also

involved themselves in very important, progressive issues, made me realize that being a doctor was an incredibly punk rock thing to be if you approached it properly, because you can have an amazing impact on people's lives.

What's your area of specialization?

Family medicine, which is the most left wing of the specialties. It's incredibly progressive in my opinion. It didn't really exist until the late '60s. It sort of came out of the counterculture of that time, where people were saying that public health standards in this country are pathetic—the poor are sicker and the sick are getting poorer all the time. Previously, there hadn't been any specialties that were concerned with primary care. Family medicine kind of came out of that. It had a cool, appealing genesis to me. ¶ At Columbia, where I went to school, it was not really encouraged to enter this field. They want more ophthalmologists and dermatologists. It's ironic because Columbia is in Washington Heights, which is a very poor, working class, entirely Latino neighborhood. It seems obvious that what that neighborhood needs is better primary care and attention to public health issues. It's kind of a battle to stick to your ideals during four years at that institution, but it's why I went into medicine.

You worked on an Indian reservation two years ago. What led you out there?

I applied for a rotation out to the Zuni reservation, which is three hours south-

west of Albuquerque. I was accepted, and spent five or six weeks there, working at this community hospital. It was the most beautiful place in the world. It was incredibly relaxing. I got a lot of music done there. I recorded a bunch of songs for *Old Wave*, *New Ride* on the drive back to New York, when I stopped in Chicago. There's a lot of space and atmosphere in those recordings, both in the songs and the performance that comes from being out there. I think that I really capitalized on the opportunity. It was also great from an anthropological perspective to be amongst a completely different ethnic group within the US—a nation within a nation, more or less. I've traveled in a lot of third world countries, and this was a completely different vibe. I did an interesting project there about risk factors for adolescent suicides there. I set up this research program, and interviewed dozens of kids at the teen clinic on the pueblo, and went through a bunch of previous research records and just saw how difficult it was to be an adolescent there. They are so separate from the mainstream culture of the country in a lot of ways. But because of that they're also becoming alienated from their own ethnic culture. As a result, a lot of those kids are caught in between—it's really difficult.

How was the Zuni healthcare system different than our own?

For the Zunis, all healthcare costs are covered. It just works a lot better for them that way, and I agree with that because I think it's morally correct—to help the sick people, and keep the healthy ones healthy, without having to be concerned about money. Yeah. One of the things I've been trying to become more involved with is a national healthcare system for the US. To me it seems obvious that that's what's necessary. Unfortunately, that's a pretty difficult thing to contend with in a capitalist society. ©

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Not unlike *The Simpsons'* Mr. Burns' heart being warmed by dogs that can stand on their hind legs, even the most cold-hearted person can't resist the bunny-like, heartwarming, sticky-sweet temptation of This Bike is a Pipe Bomb. But beware! By the time you realize these bunnies have knives behind their backs, it's too late; your consciousness is pierced. No matter how much of an impenetrable cynic you consider yourself, you can't help but feel tricked and you can't help liking it.

Seeing This Bike is a Pipe Bomb live is like being present at a musical orgy. Suddenly, you're 16 again—you believe that you actually can make a difference. You're in love with everyone in the room. The blatant ecstasy Terry, Rymodee and Ted share when playing is more contagious than the mono the boy you have a crush on has. Anything can—and probably will—happen, but you won't notice because you're too busy dancing and smiling to the point your cheeks hurt to realize that six people just broke the window out and landed in your lap. And they brought a six pack and a copy of *The Manifesto* with them.

A lot more than my heart left with This Bike is a Pipe Bomb the night I interviewed them; our friend Laila became the latest victim of the TBIAPB cult. Rumor has it she was last seen wandering the wastelands of the Arizona desert, Ramen noodles in hand, looking for a cab home. With the new year comes a new cause: Free Laila in 2003.

Interview by **Sondra Albert**

I feel as though I should warn you to watch out for the flock of feral cats that are going to be following you. I have this feral cat and she's completely freaked out right now because my other cat hates her and keeps kicking her ass, but the second I put on your cover of Crosby, Stills, Nash, and Young's "Ohio", she came out and rubbed against the record player.

Terry: We're soothing.

Why did you chose to cover that song? It's about an incident that happened 32 years ago.

Terry: Basically, one of our old members, the other guitar player, one day said "we should cover this song" and it was kind of a joke, but then it turned into *not* being a joke. Since we started playing it, we actually played a show in Kent and went to the University and saw the memorial and it meant a lot to us.

I noticed that you didn't pull up to play in the "Ramen Cab" this time. Three people in the front seat of a taxi for a nationwide tour must have been difficult. Did you finally outgrow it?

Ted: It outgrew the world.

Terry: The Ramen Cab is too good for this world. That car was all about friendship. It belonged to a good buddy of ours, Skott Cowgill. Our hometown is a really important part of what we do and the Ramen Cab was such a significant part of our scene there. Skott Cowgill moved away and we were doing this West Coast tour and thought "What if we could ride into San Francisco in the Ramen Cab, where Skott Cowgill lives?" We just wanted to be able to have that Pensacola moment where we pulled up in it. It just evolved into this thing where people *expected* to see us in it.

Rymodee: Three people crammed into the front seat of a taxicab in the middle of winter or even in the middle of summer.



THIS BIKE IS A PIPE BOMB

Ted: That's the reason this album is called *Front Seat Solidarity*. Because of those four tours we did in that car and all of us crammed into the front seat tolerating each other's gas, nagging, whatever, sometimes for 10 hours at a time

Terry: We were literally touching each other the *whole time*.

Ted: Cargo carrier on the back, and the back seat full of amps and CDs and T-shirts and there's nowhere to go and you can't stop because you *have* to make it to your show.

Terry: That really is what being in a band is all about. Just that whole scenario, it just means so much.

So the Ramen Cab started out as a cab?

Ted: It was a retired yellow cab that turned into the Ramen Cab. Skott gave people rides for Ramen noodles. After I got it and I got it going again, I had a couple of people flag me down, but they were businessmen so I didn't stop. Otherwise I would have been like, "Sure get in the car and just give me some gas money or whatever." It's an amazing car

Rymodee: I borrowed it years ago and went to the grocery store and came back and had people sitting in it just waiting for the driver to come back!

What is this obsession with all things Ramen?
It's almost disturbing. You talk about Ramen noodles all the time. I know you're all vegan,

so what the hell do you do with the Ramen?

Terry: The noodles are good.

Rymodee: We haven't always been vegan. It seems like Ramen noodles are a poor person's food, which all of us are from time to time. Sometimes we can afford tofu and sometimes we can only afford 10 for a dollar Ramen noodles. I guess it's just a symbol of getting by. The Ramen Cab: pitch in some noodles to get a ride.

One of my very favorite things about seeing TBIAPB live is that it's this big love affair when you're playing.

Ted: We're totally not afraid to make idiots out of ourselves.

Rymodee: Some of our worst shows are usually our most fun and vice versa as well.

I think of you as really nice spies for punk rock. The first time a person sees your band they leave thinking "I had so much fun. This is the most fun band ever." Then you take the record home and you listen to the lyrics and it's like being hit by a freight train.

Terry: If there's one thing that we could convey in all of our lack of musical talent and all of that genuine love is that if you have your friends there and we're playing and they're right there in our faces and we're bumping up against each other, that really is what it's all about. We're all in this together. We all believe the same things and we're all trying to make a difference and if nothing else, we all have each other. It's so amazing to me that people really get that.

Ted: Some of our songs are about horrible, horrible things that have happened. Our message when we play a show is that there are a lot of horrible things that happen, but there are a lot of great things that happen and you can solve your own problems and the problems of the world by having fun

and getting together instead of being down about everything all the time. Just celebrate the good and take the bad.

So it's this crazy juxtaposition of having a really good time without forgetting how important certain things are and the wake of that is being able to understand that everything in the world is light? That's just how I take it. I'm not in your band, so I can't say how you take it.

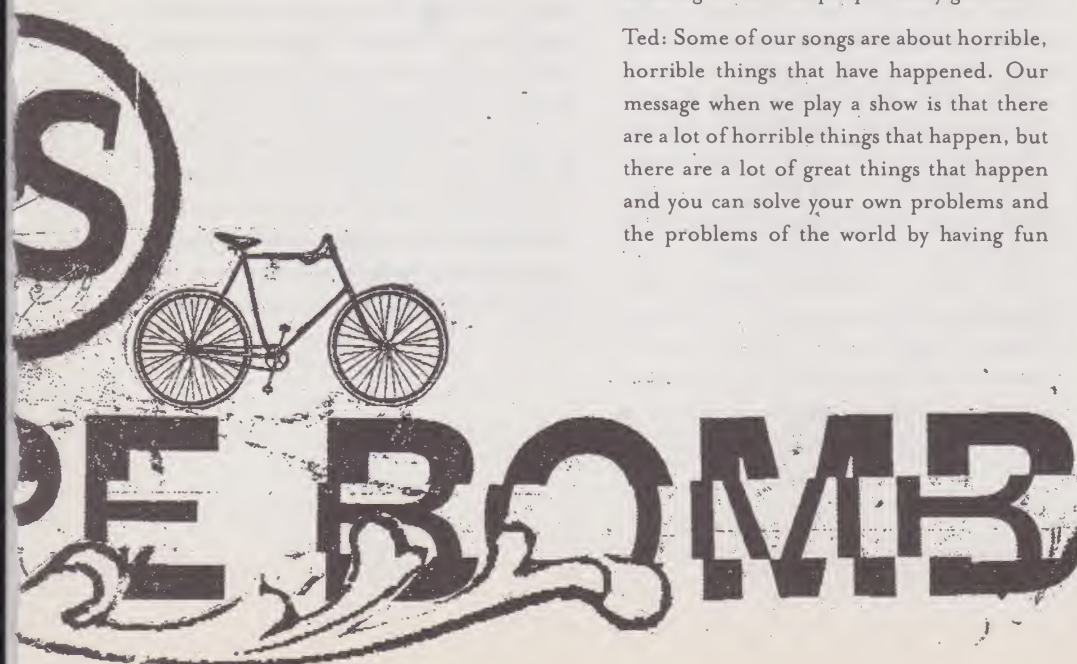
Terry: The key to everything is putting it to a punkrock beat

Is it conscious that so many of your songs are about serious, political or personal subjects and your music is so upbeat?

Rymodee: I think it goes back and forth. Not all of our lyrics are serious. I think we just have a style and way that we play. A lot of these songs are originally just acoustic and played in a folk style. So when we have a serious song I don't see any reason for changing the style or making it not a fun song. We have a new song about a police officer in Pensacola killing a woman right in front of our house. Unfortunately, I think it's a fun song and it's a fun song to play. I think it's good because it gets people interested and they're going home and singing the lyrics and all of a sudden they're like "Whoa that song's about something that's really fucked up."

Terry: Kind of like what you were saying. At first they're dancing around saying that song was really fun and when they go home they're gonna say "whoa." We want the people that come to the shows to care about it and it's this weird feeling when people are there and you're all together and connected like that. It's a good feeling. There's so much sadness, and it's easy to write a sad or serious sounding song when you're sitting in your room and you're writing those words on a piece of paper. The fact is that when you go out and you're there with your two best friends, it's really hard to be sad.

What is your goal in your community with the band?



Terry: We played shows in our hometown for years where no one showed up. We could drive all the way across the country and play Gilman and kids were totally excited and they would show up and dance and know the words to the songs and we would go back to our hometown and . . .

Rymodee: Crickets.

Terry: Seriously. We'd play to our room-mates. No one would care. It didn't really matter how much we'd tour or how fun it was or how many people showed up to our shows or whatever, it was this given that we would get home and no one would care. But suddenly, there are a lot of skate parks and kids riding BMX around Pensacola and suddenly we have this group of people that care about what we do.

Ted: They're young kids—it's awesome.

Terry: *Super* young kids

Ted: We just recently played with this punk band from the '80s called the Vomit Slots. We played first and we finally had some people coming to see us and they were dancing and then this old punk band played . . .

Terry: . . . And we're telling all these kids, "Don't leave this is going to be the best thing you've ever seen!"

Ted: And they didn't leave. They loved it and danced and once they would hear the chorus, they would sing along to it. They're this new generation and it's awesome.

Terry: There's another part of what TBI-APB is providing for the scene. We're trying to become a bridge.

Rymodee: An elderly bridge.

Ted: For the young whippersnappers.

Terri, word has it you bought a bar in Pensacola and are going to start an all-ages coop. How is that going?

Terri: I wish I had bought a bar. Had I bought a bar it would be really easy but instead I bought a thrift store, so I'm having to do all this crazy change of usage stuff. It's gigantic—you could put three bowling alleys in there and still have plenty of room to build a skate ramp or something.

Rymodee: Well, if you were a prominent

citizen of Pensacola it would have been open immediately

Terry: Oh yeah. Pensacola versus the punks, the battle rages on

What are your master plans for space?

Terry: There's going to be a show space. Actually, there's going to be *two* separate show spaces. There's gonna be a coffee shop and a little vegan restaurant in the coffee shop and there's this huge kitchen which is still kind of up in the air. Some other restaurants want to move in there.

There was a kitchen in the thrift store? What do you people *do* in Pensacola?

Terry: Yeah, because a long time ago it used to be a restaurant. There's like this burrito place that wants to move in there. We originally wanted to open this huge vegan restaurant but I don't know if Pensacola can really handle that. There's also going to be a book store and kind of pop culture thing and then we want to do a bike-in theater in the back with a little like vegan snack shop or whatever and also eventually we want to open a punk rock laundromat.

So it'll be a sit and spin and eat and bike and book? That's amazing. It seems like with all your bridge building, now is a good time to start something like that.

Rymodee: It seems to me like everything is on fire right now. There seems to be a lot of bands that don't give a crap about making money; they don't give a crap about making it big. We've played with a lot of those bands and that's more rewarding than any popularity or money could be.

Terry: We did a very special thing for ourselves when we did the folk tour. We had this big vision of putting together this whole collection of old traditional songs—protest and railway songs—and recording them in our style. We got together a little tour and we recorded the songs that really floated to the top for us. Like "Tennessee Waltz", "Casey Jones", "John Henry" a couple of Joe Hill songs. Now our community has broadened a little bit more because we've gone outside of the punk genre.

Ted: We did the actual version of "This Land is Your Land" with all the verses and the true meaning of the song instead of the stupid patriotic meaning of the song.

Terry: We put together this song book and wrote all the lyrics to all the songs we were going to do and put the chords in there and sent them out ahead of time so punk kids could get ahold of them and come to the show prepared. The idea was that we weren't going to be a band to entertain you, we're just going to all play music together. That's what folk music really is all about, which punk is kind of an extension of. Hopefully, if anyone can carry the torch of traditional music, it'll be the punks. It all went full circle. That really is what the community has developed into. A community where people are trying to hold up the idea of humanity and fuck capitalism and everything else are.

It sounds almost like an old-fashioned barn raising.

Terry: We did this preliminary tour to see if kids could accept it. We went into basements and instead of playing our "hits" [laughs] and instead of playing punk rock music—which is what they were expecting—we played these folks songs. It was amazing.

Rymodee: To me it's important that punks know that punks didn't write the first protest songs—it has been going on *forever*. The lyrical content and style of punk songs is really similar to early protest songs. We played the exact chords as they were supposed to be done, but we played them in our style and it really went well. People were singing along and dancing with their songbooks in their hands. A couple of places there was some miscommunication—people thought we were going to play acoustic and some people brought their parents. A couple of places we went there were people in their '50s or '60s with their fiddles and guitars and harmonicas thinking there was going to be a sit in. We told them we're just this young punk band

and it's going to be electric and you're welcome to play along with us—and they did!

Terry: They did it because it meant something to them.

Ted: Like that guy in Kirksville—"I've never played in a punk band before." He was so excited that he got to play traditional songs in a punk band.

Rymodee: It was really important to me at first because it was good to have punks say "I've always loved this song." Or even have another punk say "I never thought about that. I had a good time." But to have people from a completely different community come in and have a good time with us, the punks, and these teenage kids dancing was *amazing*.

Your first release was a 7" on Ghostmeat Records, but you eventually ended up with Plan-It X Records. When I first saw you I had never heard of you, I just knew you were on Plan-It X and so you must be nice people making good music.

Terry: And did you know that we can cook? We're damn good cooks!

Rymodee: We went on tour with The Devil is Electric a bunch of times and taught them how to make some *good biscuits and gravy*.

Ted: Then they went on tour and were fronting that they knew how to make them first. Like, "Oh yeah, we have this *great recipe!*"

Rymodee: Those guys are motherfuckers.

Terry: I just want to say that Chris Clavin [who runs Plan-It X] has done *nothing* but rip us off since day one. First it was the biscuits and gravy.

Besides the stealing and trickery, knowing Chris Clavin's politics and your own, Plan-It X Records seems to be a really good fit for you guys. How did you end up on Plan-It X?

Rymodee: I went on this bike trip from Gainesville to Key West and when I got there I hooked up with this kid on the street. He saw the This Bike is a Pipe Bomb Sticker on my helmet and said "Oh, my friends want to

put out those guys' records." I had no idea who his friends were and he had no idea who I was. He said "My friend has this label called Plan-It X Records." I don't think I even knew who Plan-It X Records was, but I knew who the guys from Operation Cliff Clavin were and it all blossomed from there.

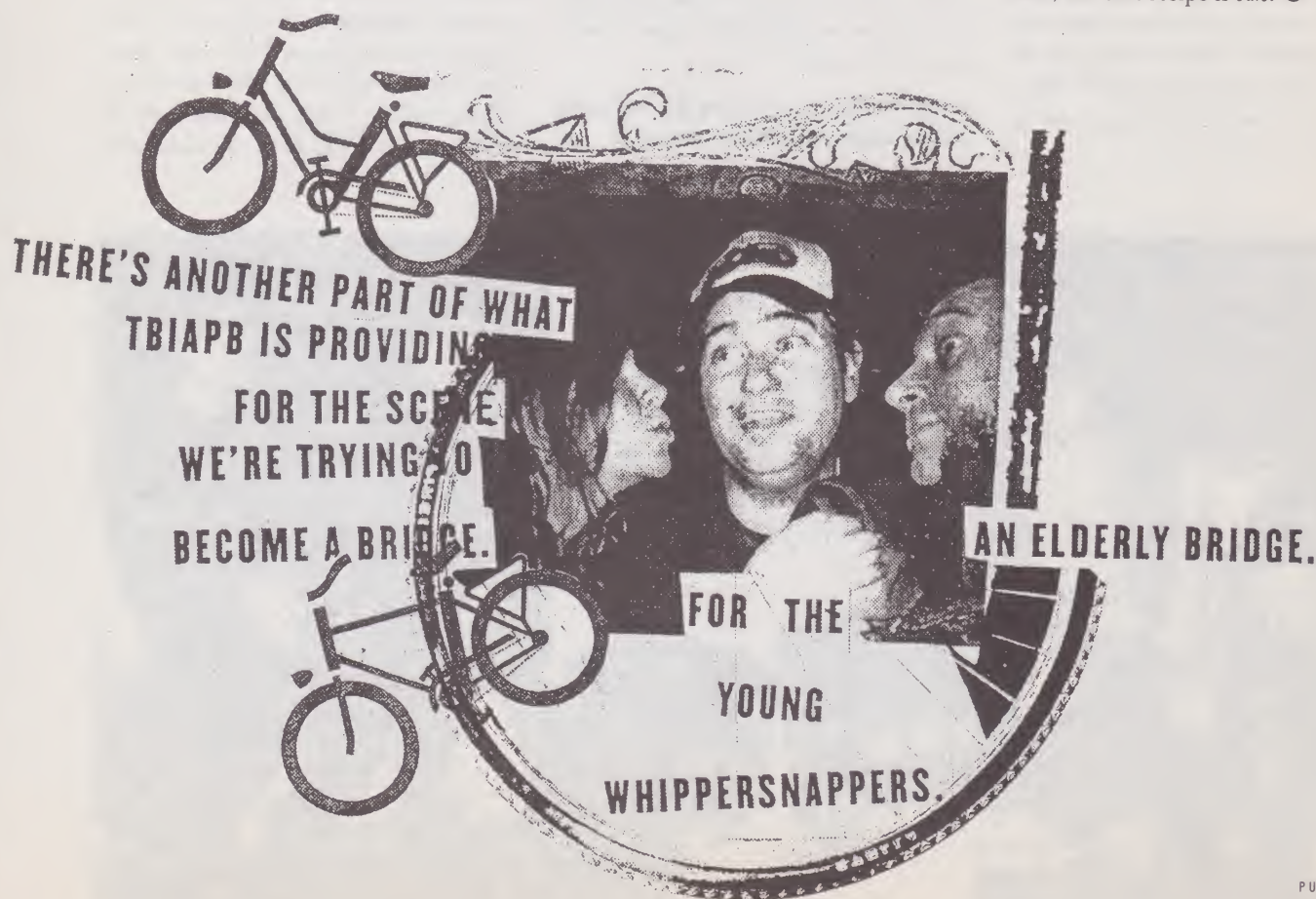
Terry: Until the biscuits and gravy.

Rymodee: He's amazing. We've got pretty much the same politics and ethics as Plan-It X.

Terry: He works his ass off and he really believes in what he's doing. Unless you don't believe in anything else in the world, there's no reason to *not* believe in Plan-It X. Nobody's trying to make any money, we're just trying to be involved and Chris Clavin really, before any of us, had such a clear vision of that and he made it happen. It's all praise to Chris Clavin because he's really got a grip on what's going on, but I will back up and say that biscuit and gravy recipe he's walking around with, that is not his.

Rymodee: He's awesome and all but he's a motherfucker.

Terry: Five dollar CDs are really cool and shit, but that recipe is *ours*. ©



One word to describe Black Dice? Defiant. The band defies convention—they focus on bursts of sound rather than notes or chords. They defy mainstream critics (*Alternative Press* gave their latest record a paltry 1 out of 5). Known for playing thunderously loud shows, they defy their audience's tolerance and patience. And they defy expectations, by *evolving*. Black Dice have so readily embraced their own evolution—chinks in the armor included—that it is impossible to know just what they'll produce next, but it will be relentlessly fresh and satisfyingly on the fringes, for sure.

Black Dice's self-titled debut is a short slab of distorted cacophony, cut-up thrash and hardcore venom. From there, the band explored horror sound barrages on the *Cold Hands* EP and ambient detours on various 7"s. But it's on *Beaches and Canyons* that the group's music really gels. The album is as sharp as their previous releases—like plate glass shattering or huge steel ships scraping together in the ocean—but it is marked by a sunny, golden vibe. Ethereal textures dance over deep, psychedelic effects from Aaron Warren's bass and Bjorn Copeland's guitar while Hisham Bharoocha—one of the most emotive drummers today—pounds out grand rhythms. Finally, Eric Copeland's processed vocals—no longer punk screams—carry everything into the territory of pulsing, post-electronic folk noise. I can honestly say *Beaches and Canyons* was my favorite album of 2002.

I spoke with Aaron Warren by phone three days into the band's 2002 tour and later photographed all of the members at Spaceland in Los Angeles. Soft spoken and thoughtful, these New Yorkers have the mel-low temperament of California surfers, or at least Burlington, Vermonters.

Interview by Charles Spano

What's it like touring America playing experimental music?

It's kind of a crap shoot. It's pretty tough sometimes, but so far it's been good. Last year when we toured it was really rocky. We cleared a lot of rooms, especially in the Midwest and the South. In general, in the last three or four years we've only done really well on the coasts, but like I said, so far it's been a lot better this year.

How do audiences respond to your music?

It's pretty good. I feel like right now there's a healthy percentage of people who are just like "I really, really like what you're doing," and then there's a fairly typical percentage that you can tell is just not feeling it at all. But at least at this point they're still coming out to check it out, which is all I can ask for. I mean, if they come and check it out and they don't like it, what more can you do?

Do you think you're expanding the boundaries of what listeners consider to be music?

I hope so. I feel like it's pretty challenging and it's *definitely* not for most people. But, to get it out there as much as we can, yeah, that's definitely our goal, I would say. ¶ I feel like even within the independent, alternative music scene it would be good if people thought about different sound ideas and different compositional ideas a little bit more. ¶ We listen to a lot of music and we listen to the radio and stuff. None of us are really that much into hip-hop, but when we listen to the radio, commercial hip hop has so much good sounds right now. Not necessarily the quality of the songwriting, but the quality of the *sounds*. I feel like it's just totally exciting compared to anything else. I think the state of most independent rock and roll music is really conservative compared to that.

But your roots are in that scene. How do you think your sound has evolved?

When I joined the band, I felt like it was really '80s thrash punk influenced. It sounded like Black Flag to me—it was really fast and really punk. I liked it a lot when I joined, and then over the first year we started getting really into jamming on feedback and stuff like that. From there we just started getting rid of the more normal song parts and getting into these more open songwriting forms. We did a lot of improv stuff for a little while and it was all *totally* bad—real shitty ideas and some *really*



I FEEL LIKE EVEN WITHIN THE INDEPENDENT, ALTERNATIVE MUSIC SCENE IT WOULD BE GOOD IF PEOPLE THOUGHT ABOUT DIFFERENT SOUND IDEAS AND DIFFERENT COMPOSITIONAL IDEAS A LITTLE BIT MORE.



disastrous shows. We seriously had probably three or four of these shows that were in between the old sound and the first beginnings of the new sound that were just really fucking dismal failures. The audience fucking hated it and we weren't even that stoked. By the time we did the tour last year, we were pretty much onto a new sound that's a little bit longer form and different ideas, but we still had fairly traditional instrumentation. Now we're working with mixers and a lot of different sound sources, so it's a lot different now. ¶ I feel like right now is a really exciting time. We're all not really sure what our next thing is gonna sound like, and that's an interesting place to be. I've played music for a while and there's some times that you're just like "I want it to sound like this," and right now I don't feel necessarily like that. I know it's gonna sound cool, but I really have no idea what we're gonna do next.

Artforum magazine called Black Dice and Erase Errata "the new no-wave." How do you feel about that label?

I don't know. For me no-wave music is quirky guitar punk, which I totally like, but for us, I feel like it's absurd. I don't even

know if I would call Erase Errata "new no-wave" really, because they definitely try and go beyond what those older bands did.

Do you think the comparison comes from what those bands were trying to do in terms of expanding what a song could be?

Yeah, that's totally cool and there's other things that are kind of analogous. I feel like it's an exciting time to be in New York—New York culture, if not specifically New York music. I think it's an exciting time to be making stuff and I think we're drawing—in a similar way to how those no-wave bands were—from a lot of non-musical influences, other conceptual ideas.

Do you think there's a conscious movement happening there right now?

I think it's maybe more of an unconscious movement.

"Unconscious" because the stuff is so different?

Yeah. But it's related situationally. Because such and such person knows such and such person. But I think it would be really tricky to find a common philosophy that linked it all together.

Do you think the best music is very particular to its historical moment?

I think it's inevitable that when you're *really* trying to get into something, you're going to look at the time that it came from and try and make broader connections between the music and the place where it came from. That's an important way to look at music, but I don't know that I would say that the best music has to come out of a certain situation.

Are there social and political factors that your music is a product of, or is it more just playing what you dig?

Living in New York, I think there is a lot of social and political factors, but I think they're totally way under the surface for us. There are things we definitely don't talk about and there are things we're not overtly interested in, but we'll read the news and talk about things on a day-to-day level. To give you a concrete example, the economy was really fucked for the last year in New York and for people in the creative arts field it was just totally fucking *impossible* to work professionally and that was a very real factor for all of us. That's something that you definitely can throw in the mix, although it's not something that we're making work about. ☺





G7 WELCOMING COMMITTEE

“**A**spectre's haunting Albert Street,” The Weakerthans sang on their song “Pamphleteer” and indeed there is. Albert Street is where Winnipeg's Old Market Autonomous Zone (A-Zone) is located. Opening in 1996, the A-Zone has been the center of the city's radical culture, housing the Emma Goldman Grassroots Centre, Junto Radical Library, Food Not Bombs, the Anarchist Black Cross, and other radical and progressive organizations. The A-Zone is also home to three collectively run businesses that operate under an alternative economic model called Participatory Economics (parecon for short).

Parecon was developed over the past decade by Michael Albert and Robin Hahnel as a vision for a more humane economy to replace contemporary capitalism. Its guiding values are: “equity, solidarity, diversity, and participatory self management.” The key vehicles to attain such an economy are: “council democracy, balanced job complexes, remuneration according to effort and sacrifice, and participatory planning.”

This vision has inspired the businesses in the A-Zone as they operate non-hierarchically through consensus-based meetings and committees. In addition, all the workers share a balance of the empowering work with the shit-work. These three parecon businesses are Mondragon Bookstore & Coffeehouse, which carries vegan food and radical literature, Natural Cycle, a bike shop and courier service, and G7 Welcoming Committee Records, the punk label started by the now legendary political pop-punk band Propagandhi.

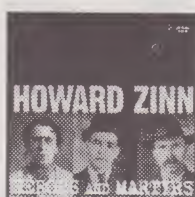
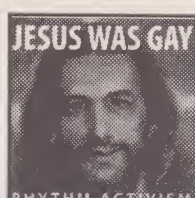
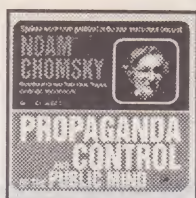
G7 was established by Chris and Jord of Propagandhi, with their friend Regal, after the band finished their final tour in 1997. They focused their energies on the label until early 1999 when it was more established, allowing them to return to Propagandhi again. More people became involved with the label and they soon began releasing music by a wide range of politically charged bands, from Germany's But Alive to the well-established Consolidated to ex-Propagandhi bassist John Samson's infamous The Weakerthans to Swedish garage rockers The (International)

Noise Conspiracy. More recently G7 has signed a number of up-and-coming bands such as Hiretukan, Che: Chapter 27, Warsawpack, and local Winnipeg acts like The Greg MacPherson Band, Malefaction and Swallowing Shit.

Besides the label's commitment to parecon and political consciousness, they are also committed to releasing unique and challenging albums, whether brutal hardcore, folk-inspired rock, or no music at all. Since its formation, the label has released more than two dozen albums, but not exclusively music. G7 has also put out political spoken word CDs by the likes of Noam Chomsky, Howard Zinn and Ward Churchill. In addition, label distributes radical literature for AK Press and other independent publishers.

I visited the A-Zone on Albert Street in October for a project I'm doing on parecon. I had the opportunity to sit down with Derek and Lorna of G7 and talk to them in more detail about what they're about and how it all works.

Interview by **Matt Dineen**



"WE'RE ALL EQUAL PARTNERS. WE'RE ALL EQUAL OWNERS"



How did G7 Welcoming Committee start?

Derek: Basically G7 was started by Chris and Jord from Propagandhi in 1997 with a friend, a different Derek started it with them. The idea was to start a label where politically progressive or radical bands could feel comfortable releasing their records knowing that the label that they were working with was on the same page as they were both politically and structurally. Organizationally we're a collectively-run business. It's just grown from there. It's been five and a half years now and we've got 27 records. It's just gotten better every year.

How does G7 differ from other independent labels in terms of the decision making process and the workplace structure?

Derek: There's a lot of labels that release a lot of political music, but there's not a lot of other labels that make it their specific goal. We look for that in *every* project that we put out. ¶ Also, other labels or other businesses may advance progressive ideas, the struc-

ture of the actual organization is in no way a progressive structure. They just replicated a top-down capitalist structure that would be in *any* corporation. It doesn't necessarily create a bad workplace if that's the case, but at the same time it's just not really an egalitarian kind of view. At G7 we're all equal partners, we're all equal owners, we have an equal decision making process, we all make the same amount of money, and there's no division based on how long we've been here or what our skill or knowledge level is.

Lorna: It's not run with hierarchies and the usual forms of sexism and racism. If we're putting out explicitly political music and then it makes sense to run that way too. But I don't know how many other labels are run.

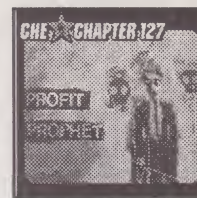
Do you specifically incorporate parecon into the way you run things or is there still some sort of division between what people do for work?

Derek: I think there's theory and practice a little bit still. Basically, our goal is to incorporate parecon—or our own version

of parecon—the best way we can. But it's kind of a work in progress all the time. In a way it's a difficult thing and you find in a small business that things have to get done very quickly sometimes. So often in those scenarios the people who are most familiar with those things will just be the first ones to do them because the prime importance of the success of the band or whatever project is happening is the imminent accomplishment of a certain thing . . . When it's not so urgent, people can be more comfortable doing different tasks.

Lorna: And teaching new skills.

Derek: There are certain tasks that are easy enough for everybody to share equally, that you can just pick up very quickly. But other things, like when you get to creative concepts or crunching numbers and accounting and stuff like that, sometimes people need a lot of training or they need to get familiar with the idea or a certain concept before performing it competently at level that can match the standard that the label



"IT'S VERY EQUAL. THERE ARE NO MINIONS."



has. It's just a matter of slowly getting people trained like that.

Lorna: But parecon is a theory, so there are different ways that businesses can run using it. Like take the café downstairs that I worked at for six years until a couple months ago: the goal there is that everyone has very similar jobs so you take turns doing accounting and promotional stuff, and everyone works in the kitchen, and does orders and that kind of thing. ¶ Other workplaces that run on parecon have more specialized tasks. For instance, I've been doing the bulk of the accounting for a few years at G7. That doesn't actually run contrary to that as long as I feel that I'm getting an equal share of creative tasks and doing some drudge work as well. But right now we're trying to forge committees and to try and train people to do more things because in reality, accounting isn't as fun as you would think.

Derek: I was shocked, really.

Lorna: Yeah, I had been so quiet about it for years [laughs]. So now I'm trying to learn how to do web stuff. When Derek and I came, there were a few gaps that needed to be done sort of immediately. I basically had to train myself in accounting because when the other Derek left, it really created a void.

Do you think that the limitation of tasks here

compared to the café/bookstore, for example, has created that division of labor?

Lorna: I don't think there is really a limit of tasks at G7. There is definitely a limit of obvious tasks. That's different from working at Mondragon, because work there is basically fueled by customer demand. Someone's at the counter, soup needs to be poured, tomorrow's special needs to be made. It's different at G7, because the only immediate and outwardly obvious tasks are the phone ringing and the mail order that has come in. But really, there is a virtually endless list of tasks that we can do. When we started, Derek and I stepped into tasks that didn't seem to be paid attention to. As a result, we've been stalled a little: me doing accounting, Derek with a lot of Internet and graphic stuff. Now we're developing committees to train each other in our particular skills. As we do this, and become more comfortable with the different work, we're able to see other tasks that would make the label function better.

But in terms of parecon, what does it mean to have a more formal division of tasks?

Lorna: There is division of labor in all of these businesses. We labor under the same structure that Mondragon does. Not everyone there is trained in all aspects of the job—not everyone knows accounting, food

ordering, or marketing—but it is something that people are working towards, and they'll rotate onto those committees eventually. ¶ There are many types of collectives that are working on parecon and collective principles. South End Press is considered a parecon business and it doesn't function in the same way that Mondragon or G7 does. There, division of labor is part of how their businesses work, but what makes them and us collectives is that they strive to give each person a balanced job complex. One person doesn't get all the glory work and another all the shit.

So, having a somewhat formal division of labor doesn't impede G7's goal of having a participatory workplace?

Lorna: Obviously we have a participatory workplace. What makes it participatory is not the committees that we are each on, which are rotating, but that we are contributing in different ways to our own workplace. We all are responsible for decision-making, and are in charge of where we're going from here. No manager, no one here has more say than any one else. It's very equal. There are no minions. ©

Matt Dineen is an activist, writer and student at Bard College in Annandale-on-Hudson, NY. Contact him at md936@bard.edu

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I FEEL LIKE WE KIND OF LANDED HERE, PUT DOWN ROOTS AND JUST MADE IT HAPPEN

Ezra Ereckson ought to do more interviews. A resident of Portland Oregon, Ezra serves as the vocalist of Systemwide, a terrific dub-influenced rock and electronic group that serves as the locus for BSI Records, Ezra's label. An Albanian-American, who takes a strong interest in Islam and refugee issues, Ezra and his partners in the band and the label are helping engineer the Pacific Northwest's first truly multicultural label.

Simultaneously issuing records by the likes of the legendary experimental artist Muslimgauze, to digital dub bands such as Alpha and Omega, Israeli-American "chamber dub" artist-cum-producer Raz Mesinai, AKA Badawi, and reggae great Daddy Freddy, BSI radiates the beginnings of a truly eclectic label in the tradition of New York's ROIR. With the '02 release of *Pure and Applied*, Systemwide's second full-length, and a short west coast tour this past summer, Systemwide is finally starting to get the attention it deserves, not to mention helping draw attention to BSI's rapidly growing catalogue.

This interview was conducted over the phone shortly after meeting him in San Francisco. The results are a truly fascinating conversation about the significance of making Islamic-positive music in the Pacific Northwest during the War on Terrorism, and the notion that dub is about taking an ethical position as much as it might be a creative way of arranging melodies.

Interview by **Joel Schalit**

Where do you see yourself in the history of Northwest music? In terms of what both you're doing with Systemwide, and as a label owner?

That's a really good question. I don't know how much of a total fluke we are, versus something that may be the beginning of something larger. I feel like our appearance here was a little bit out of nowhere. I don't feel like we were particularly picking up a strand of any kind of local music. I think we did it here because that's where we were, not because there was really a local precedent for it. I'd like to think that we've helped to give a beginning to a dub or electronic-oriented scene that has legs now; that has an identity that could evolve into different directions in the future. But yeah, I don't feel like we developed out of anything local. I feel like we kind of landed here, put down roots and just made it happen.

I think that a lot of people forget that Portland has had one of the longest standing experimental labels in the country: Soleilmoon.

Definitely. They were an inspiration, not to the band directly but to me as the head of BSI. I mean all through high school and college I shopped at their old record store, the Ooze. I sort of became friends with Soleilmoon's owner, Charles Pone. It was really nice to have a model in town of someone who was doing that who had their own very unique vision of what they wanted to do and who were manifesting it, you know?

What did you do before you went into the label business?

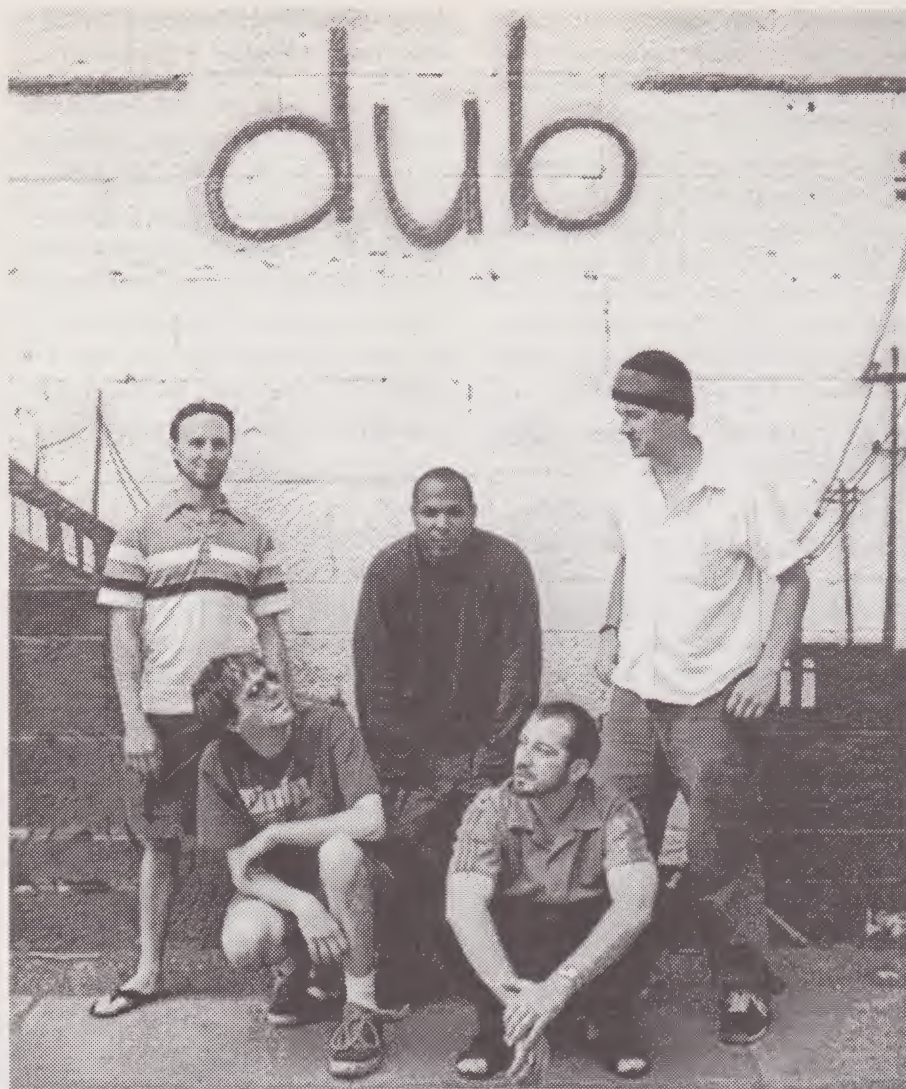
I was an English teacher at a refugee center here in town.

What kind of refugees were you working with?

A totally mixed population. I did some practicum stuff at the International Refugee Center of Oregon and just completely fell in love with the work and the people. I decided that that's where I had to be after I got finished with my post-graduate studies in linguistics. I was working in a totally mixed population, basically a class with about 20 to 25 people with an extremely low level of English ability, if any at all. With our funding mandates, the deal was that we had eight weeks to teach them basic job English, and get them out into the workforce as quickly as possible before their benefits ran out. There were lots of Russians, Somalis, Ethiopians, and Vietnamese. For a while we had lots of Kosovars, Bosnians, and Iraqi Kurds too. It was fantastic. For a while I did that half time and BSI half time. It was really tough for me to leave it because I love the work, but it just got to the point that I had to give BSI my full attention and take that leap of faith.

As a musician, you have a very broad cultural focus. Your interest in refugee issues seems to express itself in the music you make.

I hope it does. It's never consciously in my mind though, but I'm sure it's there.



Systemwide's new record, *Pure & Applied*, leans more in an Islamic direction than other work of yours that I have come across. Releasing an Islamic-positive record in such a terribly xenophobic, wartime climate is a really gutsy thing to do. Was this intentional, or just an expression of your own spiritual dispositions as an Albanian-American?

I think that's a thread that has run through all of the Systemwide stuff from the very beginning. Even on *Serious*, the first album, there was a thread of Albanian tales and a couple of the photographs in the artwork were from when Tracy and I were visiting Albania. Obviously the split singles that we did with Muslimgauze and Osmani Stepper had a lot of that content as well.

But to the outside listener it's more explicit with the new record. Besides, most people don't know anything about Islam in the United States. Even the slightest reference, particularly from an insider's perspective such as your own, can be a serious education.

Right, who out there really knows what that means? My feeling is that it's all fairly subliminal.

Maybe a better way to put it would be this: How do you feel about being an Islamic-positive band in a historic period like now?

I'm really proud of it. I'm really happy about it, but I'm the only Muslim in the group—it's not something I want to beat my chest about it, you know.

EZRA EDECKSON

SYSTEMWIDE

SYSTEMWIDE

You don't. It doesn't come across as being preachy in the least, which is why I think it's an effective political statement about the necessity of being tolerant.

There's nothing in our work lyrically that is explicitly Islamic, even though there's definitely a lot of anti-war sentiments in it. There are similes that refer to some "oriental" themes. Then there's "People of the Book" which in Islam refers to Jews, Christians, and Muslims all having come from the same religious root. That expresses my desire for people to come together and recognize the ways in which the "people of the book" are united. It's just a question of where you choose to focus.

Politically speaking, I've never lived through a more culturally impotent time, especially given how little criticism of the war that there has been in the musical community. That's part of what makes your record's Islamic component so compelling to me.

I think all of us in the band have been pretty shocked and mortified that there hasn't been more of an explicit response on the part of artists—including musicians. Obviously there have been actions all over the place, but in terms of indie music in particular, it really seems that there has been a complete abdication. All of us were really surprised by that.

Artistically, I think the most consciousness of the ongoing war are metaphorical "songs of

reminiscence" about September 11th, rather than any kind of specific focus on events that have transpired since that date. Everybody has a September 11th song now.

All that really does is serve the propaganda machine. Even if there are elements of dissonance in those songs, I think to continue to just focus on the pain of that specific event is really counter-productive and really does a huge disservice to a lot of other people that are now dying and now suffering as a result of those events.

What is it about dub, as a musical ideology, that speaks to you so clearly?

I think the form is always going to be more explicitly indebted to Jamaican music. The process is something that can be applied to other forms of music that will end up bearing no real resemblance to traditional dub. You're either attached to the process, or you're into pursuing the form. For example, take some of the bands of the new French dub scene, like High Tone or Sencile. It seems to me like it's both a form approach and a sort of process-oriented one, in that they play music that is heavily indebted to reggae, and they also produce it in a way that refers back to Jamaican forms of production.

The reason I ask is because dub seems to be a rhetoric as much as it is a specific way of making music. Look how many techno artists invoke the term, and yet, when you listen to

someone like Vladislav Delay, you'd never in a million years be reminded of King Tubby.

That's a really good point. The reason that the word gets thrown around so much is that it has a multiplicity of meanings. Being in this business, being a sort of dub-oriented label, I'm constantly seeing how that word is used and how it's stretched. Some folks have a very strict definition of it, to the point that they get kind of irate. I'm definitely of the opinion that dub is about a certain ethical position in a way.

What do you mean by "ethical"?

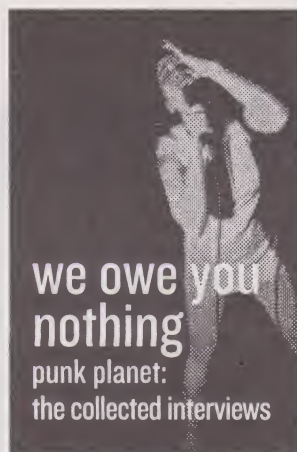
The forwarding of the bass and the drum in the mix to me is a real statement of ethical priorities—it's almost like it defines a certain moral position, you know? It's really about the fundamentals; about that heart-beat rhythm; about the kind of thing of holds the poles of the universe in place. Everything else is details and ornaments: the sound effects and the keys and the guitar and the traditional sort of dub palette—all of those things are there to beautify. But what really holds it all in place is the bass and the drum. I think that's why I've always responded to it as a music is that it seems to really be aware of itself not only as force for positive change, but also as a reflection of universal principles. ©

I THINK TO CONTINUE TO JUST FOCUS ON THE PAIN OF THAT SPECIFIC EVENT IS REALLY COUNTER-PRODUCTIVE AND REALLY DOES A HUGE DISSERVICE TO A LOT OF OTHER PEOPLE THAT ARE NOW DYING AND NOW SUFFERING AS A RESULT OF THOSE EVENTS.

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Yo! Weren't you supposed to sign off on that planning report this morning? What gives?



Oh, I'll tell you what *gives*—I *gives* a fuck about that planning report! Especially since I haven't slept in three days! If you want me to hand over that planning report you're more than welcome to bomb my cubicle! Who gives a shit anymore?



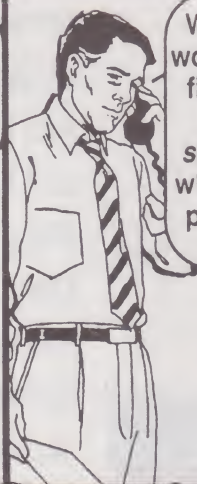
Thank you, Allah, for this Holy War! Now I can't even get a fucking planning report!



Hey, are you on CNN.com? They've got a really interesting poll; they ask "Is al-Qaeda sending coded messages to followers via video statements?" You can answer "Yes" or "No!"



What about "How the fuck would I know?" Who's qualified to answer a goddamn poll about *coded video statements*? Any American who bothers answering that poll probably masturbates to Tom Clancy novels!



Wow! 100,000 responses!



As-Salaam Alaikum. Do you have any alcohol left in your cubicle? I've been studying current events again.



Shalom. There are five bottles of Jim Beam under my desk—two are empty and three are full. Come on over.



GET YOUR WAR ON



It would be easy to get lofty when talking about David Rees's web comic *Get Your War On*. It would be simple to say how it exposes the unspeakable absurdity of the war on terror; how his stark, repetitive approach to the strip (it's all told using public-domain clip-art images) boils down the horror of the last year's news reports and lets you laugh in the face of your own mortality. But it's way easier to cut to the chase and say this: *Get Your War On* is fucking funny.

Originally created just to help himself deal with the dread he was feeling post-September 11th (the first page of comics went online just 48 hours after the bombing in Afghanistan began), Rees soon found hundreds of thousands of people reading his comic online. At a time when essays were being penned decrying the "end of irony" and comics were on TV saying we would "never laugh the same again" people were connecting with Rees's biting sense of humor. For many—this author included—it was exactly what was needed in such difficult times.

"The best way to dominate a situation or to own it is to make a joke about it," Rees explains. "And not to make a joke about how Osama bin Laden has sex with a camel, because that joke is not funny. You have to really dig. You have to get dark."

The darkness that fuels *Get Your War On*, which Rees has updated on a sporadic basis for a year and a half now, is the darkness of

today—of a time when you half-expect George W. Bush to "fuckin' rip his face off and it's gonna be *Ming the Merciless* up under there" or for Dick Cheney to be "the last man walking the scorched, post-apocalyptic earth." And in exposing that darkness so directly, Rees makes it a little easier to bare.

This interview was conducted in a dark bar on Chicago's North Side during a stop on Rees's cross-country book tour promoting the Soft Skull-released collection of the *Get Your War On* online strips. The book is not only worth picking up because it is both uproariously funny and painfully moving, but also because Rees is donating all of his proceeds to Adopt-a-Minefield's work in Afghanistan.

Interview by **Daniel Sinker**

Photo by **Jen Knee**

Comics by **David Rees**

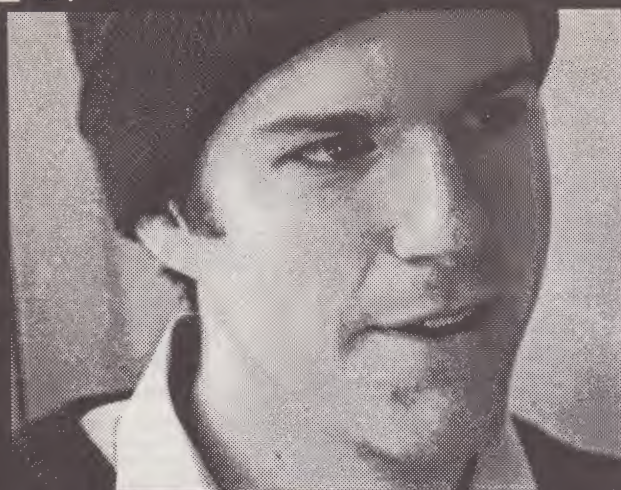
After September 11th and in the months that followed, I felt catatonic. So it was amazing to stumble across work as raw, creative and downright funny as yours. During those difficult months, how did you manage to do it?

I had to get this off my chest. Late one night I was going to update my website with the regular, apolitical comics and it just struck me that I just couldn't continue with business as usual. Since I was sitting at my computer with the clip-art open, it was like "Hell, I'll make the clip-art characters say

what I'm actually feeling." It wasn't like I was sitting around thinking "God, I have to come up with a really powerful anti-war tool." I'm not an activist. I'm not coming from that background. But after September 11th, I really had to come to terms with my own death—what felt like an imminent death—because I live in New York City. That first night I did the strip, I was thinking to myself "OK, when I was in high school, my friends and I would play our little punk rock music and sing and yell about Ronald Reagan, but if there has ever been a time in my life to create something about what is happening in the world, now is that time." I remember sitting in a church on the evening of September the 12th and asking myself "Is this experience going to destroy you or not?" And I made a decision that no, it would not. I sat there in that church and let it shatter me. I feel like you have to let that happen to have a real, honest reaction to what happened that day. To break down and sob, just gasping, and then to realize that you are alive and not to forget what a gift that is and keep going. I decided that all this shit that was going on, I was going to own it and make these comics about it. I decided to make them so simple and dark and to face it. I scooped it out of my gut and had these little guys say what I was feeling.

What kind of stuff had you been doing before?

david rees



THE BEST WAY TO DOMINATE A SITUATION IS TO MAKE A JOKE ABOUT IT. AND NOT TO MAKE A JOKE ABOUT HOW OSAMA BIN LADEN HAS SEX WITH A CAMEL, BECAUSE THAT JOKE IS NOT FUNNY. YOU HAVE TO REALLY DIG. YOU HAVE TO GET DARK. BECAUSE THE DARKER YOU GET, AND HAVE IT STILL BE FUNNY, YOU'RE THAT MUCH MORE ON TOP OF IT.

Just totally, apolitical, absurdist, profanity-laden, crazy comics that didn't have anything to do with reality whatsoever. They're comics that I started doing because I was bored at work. *Get Your War On* keeps the profanity and the clip-art imagery, but I wanted to focus on what I felt were *screamingly* obvious truths and just express them as directly and with as much force as I could.

What makes you continue to do it?

When I first started doing it, it was so new to me—it was such a new experience and mode of expression—that I was totally into it and it was so exciting and rewarding. But after a while, what are you going to do? It's four pictures and they cuss—that's the schtick. So I started doing things like putting Voltron into the comic to see what happened. Now the threshold is I do it if something makes me so angry and upset. Like "Jesus, I can't believe I am sitting here staring at *Henry Kissinger* again, and he is going to lead the September 11th probe. That is just *insane*." So I take 20 minutes and vomit onto the keyboard. The strip now is about really specific things that anger me, like the State Department urging not to pursue this human rights lawsuit in Indonesia. When I read that, I was so enraged I was shaking the newspaper on the subway. And it was like "Oh, of course I'll make comics about it." ¶ So it's like that now. I don't want to be on a schedule where I have to do it every Monday. But fundamentally I always try to retain that feeling I had that first night, which was just so awe-

some. I felt like I had really conquered this dread that had crept over me. That's a pretty high bar that I set for myself and I don't want to invest too much in it unless I feel like I can get back to that level again.

I'm assuming the comics went online that first night. How long did it take before it was more than just the dozen or so people you e-mailed the link to looking at the site?

Probably three or four days. I still have the bar graph that I printed out from my web host that week. Beforehand two of the three people that looked at the website are sitting at this table [*motions to himself and his brother*] the third was my mom. So I had a \$9-a-month plan—you could move like 40 kilobytes a month in web traffic. When you look at that bar graph, it's just flat and then it leaps up. It was crazy, just *crazy*. It was so personal and dark, I couldn't believe so many people were getting something out of it. But I got all these e-mails from people that were so personal and sincere and grateful. That was one of the highlights of the experience. But initially, I would tell my friend "600,000 hits today? How do I take it *down*? This is too much! Am I going to get bricks thrown through my window?" I was getting letters from my web host saying "Mr. Rees, our records show that you're going to have \$1000 of over-usage penalties this month. We suggest you do something about it." ¶ I had to go through this shift in my mind where I said, "OK this is no longer going to be private and personal. From now on, there is going to

be an audience." So for me, this year has been a struggle between trying to do something that's very personal and yet a lot of people are looking to you to say what they're feeling or feel less alone.

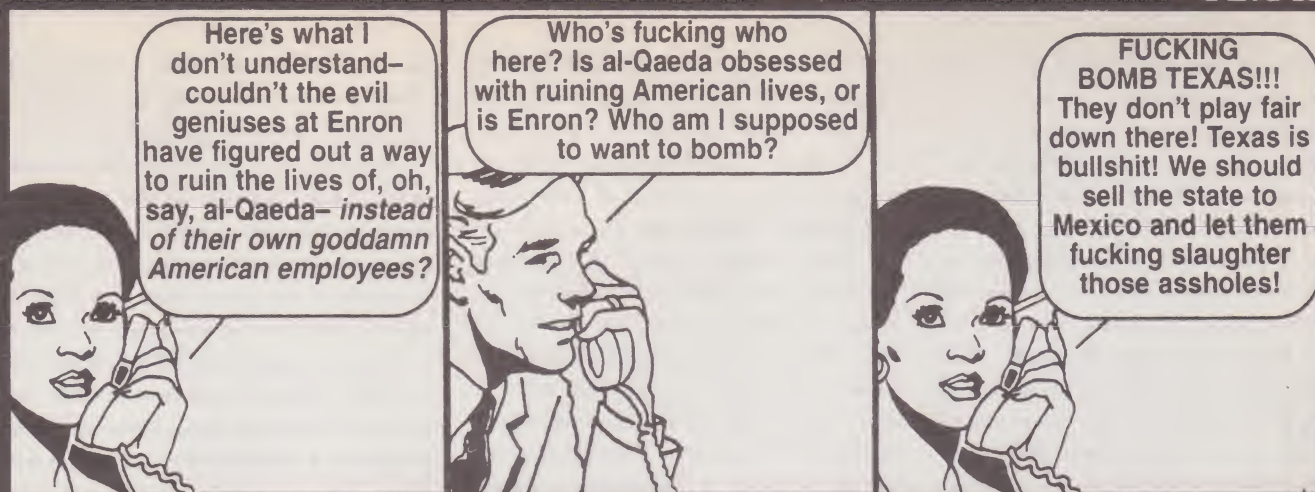
When you say "a lot" of people, what's "a lot"?

It's really hard to tell. I got 25 million hits in the last year. But 25 million hits isn't 25 million people. It's probably over a million visits to the website, but again, half those visits are probably me and my mom. I honestly don't know. There's a lot of hype about websites and people always inflate their numbers, but I don't fucking care, so I'll just tell people what it is: I do not know how many people have visited it.

Knowing that all of a sudden it wasn't you, your brother, and your mom looking at the site, how did that affect the actual process of making the comic?

For a while I don't think it affected it so much because the process itself was just so new and exciting I was doing it every week or every-other week. It was so incredible—this rush of realizing I could say whatever I wanted and I could make myself feel better by making this strip about how dark I had been feeling. But after a while it became less about catharsis for me and more about making another strip so maybe I'd feel better and a lot of other people would feel better too.

How engaged in politics were you before September 11th?



Not much in an activist sense. I've always felt that my sympathies politically are to the left. My parents are religious Christians and they see in the example of Jesus a call to human service and concern about justice and stuff. I think they had a big influence on me. But also the Minutemen also had a *huge* influence on me. The night that I made those first strips, I was asking myself "What would D. Boon do in this situation?"

D Boon, huh? How did that happen?

In eighth grade, my best friend and I were up really late at night watching *Night Flight* and they had a whole night on the Residents. We had *never* heard music like that before. It was a revelation for me: anyone can make music. My friend worked at Burger King, so he had extra money and he called me up the next day and said "You know that band we saw on TV last night? I think I just bought *every one* of their records." He also bought the one-year anniversary issue of *Spin* magazine because it had an article about the Residents and there was also a big retrospective of the Minutemen in it. The article made them sound so intriguing and the writers were *so* into them. It was like "Oh my god, it's going to be another crazy, weird band like the Residents." And so sure enough the next day my friend calls me up and says "OK, went out and bought a bunch of these Minutemen records. They're *really* crazy . . . wanna come over and listen to them?" It's really cheesy to say this, but I will never forget the moment, it was so wonderful. It was a sunny afternoon and he had bought *Double Nickels on the Dime*.

He was like "listen man, *listen to this song*." And he dropped the needle onto "Shit from an Old Notebook." The first line is "Let the products sell themselves, fuck advertising commercial psychology, psychological methods to sell should be destroyed." No rhyme, no verse, no chorus, just crazy, crazy sounding stuff. We were *so* hooked. They're still my favorite band and *Double Nickels on the Dime* is still my favorite record partly because for me it was such a new world, and it seemed so full of possibility. To me they're the pinnacle of what artistic expression can be—to marry your political or your humanistic concerns with this formal technique of the highest caliber. And so that night, when I decided to make this comic, I just thought "D Boon would be able to do something in a situation like this." And I wondered if I could do the same.

That's interesting, because I really latched onto your stuff because it had this punk rock spirit. This spirit of truth-saying and not giving a fuck about whether it was the right thing to do or not. It was so refreshing to read because no one was saying this stuff. The mainstream media has become so neutered . . .

I don't think "neutered" is the right word. You watch CNN and they have a *huge* fucking hard-on for a war with Iraq! But I know what you mean. It was always so frustrating to me—would just one fucking person outside of the *Z* magazine subculture of ex-hippies, just *say* that we are probably about to more or less lead to the deaths of tens of thousands of Afghans? I'm very grateful

that a lot of those worst-case scenarios didn't come to pass, but that doesn't change the fact that *nobody* would say it and *nobody* cared. ¶ Once I did the strip and people started reading it, it was like "What the fuck, I'll just keep saying it." Bush gets out there and says "Fellow Americans, let's roll." That is so tacky and cheesy and he sounded like a fucking *dumbass*. When I started making the strip, it was to read something that I *wished* somebody would write. And so last fall, it was like "OK, I'll say it." Like saying "Dick Cheney, oil industry bitch motherfucker." It felt *good*.

What if someone *had* said it?

Then I probably wouldn't have done it. I guess if someone else had made the same points using the same tone—the same anger, the same profanity—I would have felt reassured and I would have never thought of doing it myself. It was really about going "Jesus Christ, why isn't *anyone* saying this?"

So you ended up saying it, but you were also able to say it in a way that exposed the absurdity of the situation. You were able to be upset about things that you should be upset about but make fun of the things that should be made fun of.

Well what else are you going to do man? One of the reasons I made the strip is because these people like [*Vanity Fair* editor] Graydon Carter would come out and say "this is the end of irony, we're entering a new phase." People were *so* eager to tell us not only what was and was not appropriate

in terms of a response to September 11th, but what was and was not even *possible*. And I found that just so appalling, condescending, and frankly, un-American. I was like, "You think we can't make a joke about it or be ironic about it? Watch me, you assholes." ¶ That night, I thought about the people that I respect so much, people like Lenny Bruce and Richard Pryor. They were able to make jokes about things that were *incredibly* dark and painful. That is one of the things that gives me goosebumps when I think about the human race: people are able to fucking *wrench* humor out of things that should just shatter them. But now that it's happened to Manhattan, we're all of a sudden not going to be able to do that? That's *insane*. That's just seceding so much to Mohammed Otta. What are you going to do? Fucking kill yourself or just go to bed and never get up again? No. You have to be stronger than that. And the best way to dominate a situation it is to make a joke about it. And not to make a joke about how Osama bin Laden has sex with a camel, because that joke is not funny. You have to really dig. You have to get *dark*. Because the darker you get, and have it still be funny, you're that much more on top of it. ¶ But I think part of the reason people like Carter were writing that stuff is because death just goes against the American sensibility; it confounds consumer capitalism and our obsession with youth. Death puts the ixnay on *all* that stuff and that's why September 11th was so disruptive. You see all these signs and bumper stickers that say "never forget", but you know that everyone looking at that sign would like to do *nothing* more than forget. But that's why I love those signs, because it's a very radical sensibility to not forget the pain of that day.

I wish everyone with that slogan plastered on their SUVs thought of it in that way. Unfortunately, I think it's more about "I'll never forget that day you kicked my ass and one day when I find you I'll kick your brains out." It's revenge, not remorse.

Yeah, that's probably true. But to me, it's important to remember how I felt that day. On the morning of September 11th, I was

out back watering our plants and thinking "Goddamn there are a lot of sirens this morning. I can't stand how noisy it is here in New York." The phone rang and it was my wife—she was my girlfriend back then—and she said "Turn on the TV, a plane hit the World Trade Center." I can never remember if I turned on the TV before or after the second tower was hit. I always try and remember the feeling of that day, the dread of that day. I don't dwell on it, I don't think of it every day, but I feel like to be true to this past year, I want to remember all that stuff. ¶ The smell . . . Jesus. That is the one thing that you had to be there. The wind would blow a certain way and you would smell the smell of death. I had never smelled death before. I'm not trying to be poetic, it was the smell of burned buildings and burned bodies—things that had been reduced to dust and ash. It was disturbing. I don't think about it every day and it doesn't keep me from waking up in the morning, but how could you *not* keep it in the back of your mind.

In a way, watching the progression of the strip is to watch this progression of blurbs asking for donations to help cover your web-hosting fees, or to eat on your book tour. It's been obvious that you're broke and the strip ain't bringing much in. And yet all your proceeds from the book are going towards Adopt-a Minefield. What led to that? I don't think anyone would accuse you of taking advantage of the situation if you had said "Look, I've been doing this all out of pocket, this book is just going to help me cover the costs I've incurred."

I just felt like I didn't have anything to give to help out after September 11th. I couldn't give blood and I didn't have any money. On a micro level, that's what was going on. But on a macro level, it was like Jesus, there was *so much* potential after September 11th. It was so disruptive, so shattering, I really felt like what if America really got back to its promise and everyone acted every day the way they did on September 11th. All the systems collapsed and *people* had to step up to the plate and help each other out. But over the course of the past year to see that promise just disappear was *so* depressing to

me. In publishing the book, I went into it thinking about these two things. And third, I thought it would be *so cool* to give all the money away—it would make me feel so much better. ¶ But I didn't know who to give the money to. I thought at first I could give it to a September 11th charity, but they had *a lot* of money at this point. And so I thought about it some more and decided I wanted to tie it into the strip somehow. And then it was like, "Of course—my favorite strip: the one about the people being blown up by the landmines. I wonder if there are people out there that remove landmines in Afghanistan?" So I went to Google and typed in "Afghanistan, landmines, remove them" and I found all these organizations. I called up Adopt a Minefield because they were in New York. And after this long explanation of what I wanted to do, she says "What kind of book is this?" I had been *trying* to get off the phone before that came up, but I said "Well, it's kind of a comic book and it's got these two guys that kind of sit around and talk on the phone about Operation Enduring Freedom." And she was like, "Oh, does it have *a lot* of cussing in it?" And I was like "Yeah . . ." And she goes "We *love* that comic!" So that next week I went and met them and they were open and friendly and supportive. ¶ At this point it is so perfect. In the course of a year I went from being really upset about something, to making this comic that helped me work through it personally, to having that help a lot of other people out, and then to exploit the popularity of the comic to help eliminate the situation that made me so upset in the first place—that's a *good* year. Knock on wood, I will come out of this whole situation raising \$40,000 for Adopt-a-Minefield. People ask me why I don't do the comics as much anymore. But it's like this: I started making the comics because I was so bothered about the situation in Afghanistan, but now I'm *doing* something about it. The comics couldn't do that, so fuck the comics. I'm about to sign a big, posterboard, lottery-winner check for \$40,000. I don't need the comic anymore—go clear the mines dudes, let's do it! ☺

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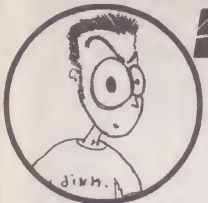


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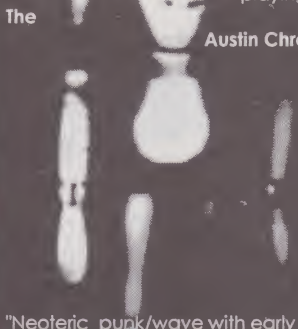
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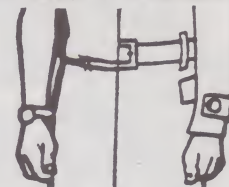
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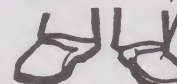
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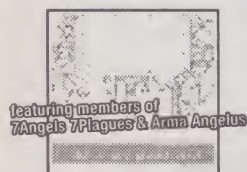


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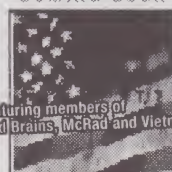
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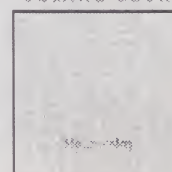


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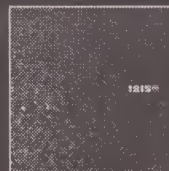
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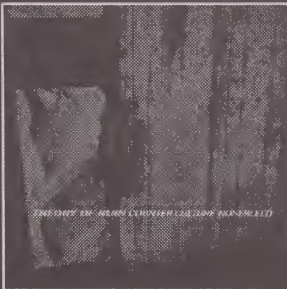


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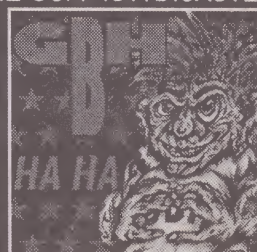
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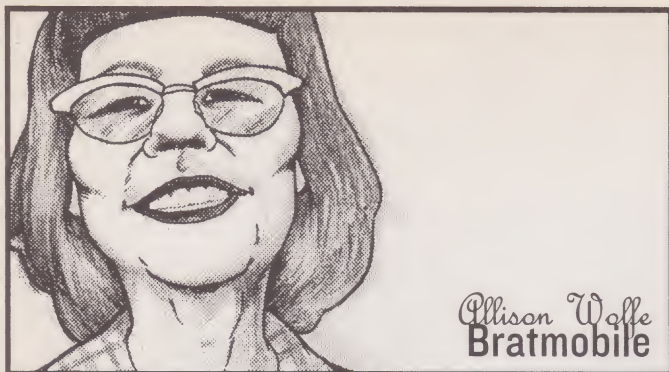
Artists' Responsibility in a Time of War

Introduction and interviews by Mike McKee Illustrations by Dustin Mertz

A mass demonstration in London against America's pending war against Iraq drew more than half a million people earlier this year. Chances are, whether you live in Louisville or Leeds, you didn't hear much about it. The paltry coverage the event received typically capped the attendance around the 150,000 mark—echoing similar coverage of anti-war marches in Washington DC and San Francisco.

Meanwhile, politicians and performers alike pony up to jingoist notions of Bush's popular "with us or against us," repeating the new credo like a mantra. Sadly, through opportunism, compliance and silence, little has been offered by the mainstream artistic community in the way of dissent.

As rock stars once again double as army recruiters and representatives (elected, appointed and ballot-thieving alike) opt for paths of least resistance, much of the so-called indie and punk scenes dissolve into political ambiguity, taking flimsy refuge in disaffected irony and a privileged sense of entitlement. As the bombs drop, maybe it's worth reflecting on the idea of punk as a conscious rejection and a life-affirming alternative.



In the early '90s, Allison helped give shape to the budding Riot Girl movement with her fanzine, *Girl Germs* and her now legendary band, Bratmobile. When the mainstream media wrote Riot Girl off as a dead trend, Allison continued spreading her dance-friendly feminist jams in The Cold Cold Hearts and later re-formed Bratmobile in time for the millennium. In addition to her music, Allison remains a dedicated activist and collective member of Ladyfest DC.

Protest music has been a part of pop and rock music for an easy 50 years now. Do you feel like much has changed?

A lot has changed, and not for the better. It seems like in the late '60s and early '70s, dissent was more widely accepted and discussed in music and the media. I think government and corporate control over media, public opinion, and the people in general is more consolidated and absolute compared to 30 years ago—Clear Channel, anyone? This makes it harder for voices of dissent to be heard, especially since September 11. I find it hard to believe more people in alternative music scenes these days don't speak out against Bush, the war in Afghanistan, the war on terror, war against Iraq, US support of the military government of Israel, and so forth. We need some modern versions of Buffy Sainte-Marie. A post-Nirvana era in which it's not cool to speak out—I find that *boring!*

As an artist, do you feel a responsibility to comment on current events?

I find it hard to believe in art just for art's sake, although I know people who do. I believe everyone can and should be creative, and I also believe in people's socio-political responsibility. It's important for alternative voices to be heard, because we are up against so much conservative spin. If we do not shout out above the din of "United We Stand" or struggle to spit out the American flags shoved down our throats, then we'll all drown and choke in this conservative crap. And it kills, and will continue to kill. If you're indeed alternative, independent, or DIY, then speak out!

Is there significance to simply being visible in dissent against popular opinion?

I think it's important to set an example, because people in bands are being watched, whether they like it or not. I don't mean that you can't be the real human that you are, but I think it's important to take a stand on the things you believe in, to use your public voice or persona toward the public good, even if it's just to show others that they are not alone.

If you felt strongly about something would you feel comfortable addressing it with your music?

If it's something you feel strongly about, it *will* come out in your creative expression. Not everyone expresses dissent in the same way; it doesn't have to be "obvious" or sloganeering.

What are the barriers between artist and audience that can obscure this kind of message?

I suppose it can come off as "preachy" to an audience member, because there's an unequal power dynamic between the performer and audience, and the audience can come to resent that. Yet, I would resent it more if the band just stood there, jammed, jacked off, and said nothing. What *isn't* said is just as political as what is said. People's silence in the face of atrocity is offensive to me.



Perhaps punk's most gifted English major, Ted's ability to poetically fuse the intensely personal with the political is rivaled only by his commitment to practice what he preaches. Now performing solo, the former singer for the aggressive Citizen's Arrest, the mod-reviving Chisel and part-time contributor to groups like the Secret Stars and The Spinnanes, Ted's work serves as a reminder of punk's ability to adapt without sacrificing passion or conviction.

As an artist, do you feel a responsibility to comment on current events?

I do feel a responsibility to comment on current events in my music, but it's a personal thing. I don't dismiss "art for art's sake." I usually appreciate it, but I don't generally make it. I feel a vocation to be an artist like those who've influenced me and stirred my heart to feeling, thought and action.

Protest music has been a part of pop and rock music for an easy 50 years now. Do you feel like much has changed?

We like to think that in the '60s and '70s, the above-ground artists accepted by the establishment were all singing protest songs against the Vietnam War, racism, or poverty, but were they really? I think that then, as now, you had a few outspoken mainstream artists making protest music—Bob Dylan and John Lennon immediately spring to mind. Today I think you'd find their parallel—not *artistically*, mind you, but in their position in popular culture—in someone like Eddie Vedder or Bono. Those who *really* spoke out back then seem to have been, by and large, the more underground types.

If you felt strongly about something would you feel comfortable addressing it with your music?

I think that if I felt strongly about something, it would *automatically* have direct relation to my art. I don't write about everything that I feel strongly about, but I think I can say that everything I write about, I feel strongly about.

What are the barriers between artist and audience that can obscure this kind of message?

Some of the barriers are also the conduits. Dangers can arise when the artist becomes more of the focus than the art or the message and being visible becomes an *end* instead of a *means*. I think that sometimes the large personalities of artists can discourage the audience from pursuing things that they might be productive in—they get discouraged or lulled into thinking that their place is perpetually in the audience. Also, sometime simply buying the record and wearing the T-shirt is presented as being enough when actually the money spent on those types of things is going straight back into the "machine" you thought you were "raging" against. It depends on how much both parties—the artists and the audiences—recognize the positives and negatives of their interactions.



Pittsburgh's Anti-Flag is the type of band one would expect to drop punk-minded political science—the name itself just begs to be stenciled on a jacket. While anti-authoritarian motifs dominate much of the melodic, street-punk set, Anti-Flag's stamina and commitment to extrapolating on its lyrical themes sets the band apart from the crowd. Singer Justin Sane also helps run A-F Records, which has released Modey Lemon and Endless Struggle among others.

If you felt strongly about something would you feel comfortable addressing it in your art?

We use our music to inspire others and ourselves to transform our society into one that values *people over profits*. With that principle being the basis for what we do, it's hard for us to imagine how an issue that we care deeply about and want to raise awareness about wouldn't relate to our music.

Have you ever dealt with criticism or backlash in result to your lyrics, your views or the way in which you choose to operate?

I feel a vocation to be an artist like those who've influenced me and stirred my heart to feeling, thought and action.

Ted Leo

In punk rock, you are always dealing with criticism and backlash—some of it's justified, some of it isn't. Anyone can write safe music that doesn't challenge anyone. We try to stay focused on what the message is and how we can get that message out without compromising it.

As an artist, do you feel a responsibility to comment on current events?

We absolutely feel a responsibility as artists to comment on current events. When people start thinking that they don't have a right and responsibility to comment, influence and participate in their government and society, we're in *huge* trouble as a democracy!

Protest music has been a part of pop and rock music for an easy 50 years now—do you feel like much has changed?

What we think has changed is the political reality of the United States. It seems that rather than progressive legislation and programs being implemented, now it is more the case of stopping really draconian measures from being implemented. We believe this is a direct result of the Democratic and Republican parties representing their real constituents—corporations.

Is there significance to simply being visible in dissent against popular opinion?

Being visible as a dissenter doesn't only ward off isolation, it helps others to find their own voice and gives them courage to stand as visible as dissenters themselves. There's something about being human that makes us want to fit in.

What do you find distressing about the current political climate in the US?

Our country has rampant corporate crime and corruption that no one in government takes seriously because they're on the payroll of these same corporations. Our country has an undeclared war against the poor—millions of Americans have no health care, yet the US is the richest country in the world. US foreign policy is abysmal—our government goes around overthrowing and destabilizing democratically-elected governments all over the world. Americans are surprised that people in other parts of the world hate us? Sometimes we wonder how it is that there are any people who *don't*! It's just inexcusable the degree to which people here don't give a fuck about anyone else anywhere else in the world.



Being named America's best rock band by *Rolling Stone* is probably the last thing the members of Sleater-Kinney had set for their year-end goal. Still, the group's latest offering, *One Beat*, demonstrates an expansive, daring imagination pushing the band and music at large forward.

Protest music has been a part of pop and rock music for easily 50 years now—do you feel like much has changed?

I think that music's place in popular culture has shifted slightly. Maybe it's because I tend to romanticize an era like the late '60s and all that music stood for back then, but I do think that what is considered mainstream music is fairly void of meaning and content these days. As a result, I think people have stopped looking to popular music as a means of explaining or describing their own experience. Music is merely entertainment for most people, it has lost some of its efficacy. People's tastes have been watered down.

As an artist, do you feel a responsibility to comment on current events?

As an artist, I feel a responsibility only to make good art. Part of making good art, to me, is to find a new way of explaining the world around me, or the world inside of me.

Is there significance to simply being visible in dissent against popular opinion?

As a musician, I have both a public and a private life. In the public sense, it feels important to be a visible in my dissent. In the private sphere, visibility doesn't feel like enough anymore. I feel it is necessary to take a more active role in my community and in my city. My art and my activism are not necessarily related, because I find it too limiting as an artist.

What do you find distressing about the current political climate in the United States?

Simply not being George W Bush, or not being a Republican is *not* a valid party platform. I feel like many Democrats have lost their gumption, and one of them who had any, Paul Wellstone, died in a plane crash. I think the election results shed light on how disenfranchised many Americans feel right now: who is speaking for us; who is representing us? And of course I am distressed about our likely war with Iraq.

If you felt strongly about something would you feel comfortable addressing it with your music?

We sometimes have groups come in and table at our shows, that way

fans can make up their own mind as to whether they want to read more about an issue or get in a discussion with someone about it. I don't want the stage to be a soapbox for my own issues, nor do I want to be a didact. For me, music is a way of communicating with people on a visceral level—on a level that transcends the confines and rules of every day discourse and polemics are part of that discourse. Music is a way to understand things on an emotional level—I don't want to take away from that by turning our show into a political rally. There is something *inherently* political about this band, I don't need to cram anything down people's throats.

Have you ever dealt with criticism or backlash in result to your lyrics, your views or the way in which you choose to operate?

Yes. Being political doesn't merely entail singing a protest song or expressing dissent. Try being in an all-female band. Female musicians are asked to defend themselves and their lyrics and to justify their very essence *all* the time.



Having played bass in seminal groups such as Policy of Three and 400 Years, Bull now plays in RAMBO. Throughout the last decade and his musical projects, Bull has also played a pivotal role in his own community as an activist, a volunteer at Philadelphia's radical infoshop, Wooden Shoe Books, and in his work with the Mariposa Food Co-Op.

Protest music has been a part of pop and rock music for an easy 50 years now—do you feel like much has changed?

The rich have gotten richer, the poor have gotten poorer, the corporations are more powerful and unaccountable. The G-8, World Bank and IMF wreak more havoc daily. The media is owned by the corporations it should be exposing for all of their wrongdoings. Clear Channel is monopolizing venues and radio stations nationwide.

Is there significance to simply being visible in dissent against popular opinion?

Every movement for social justice I've ever heard of has started out small. The more that people speak out about injustices, the more people will learn about them. Over time the movement will grow and popular opinion will shift. It's hard to see through the biased lies and propaganda the government and media put forth. We need to present an alternative to that.

What, if anything, do you find distressing about the current political climate in the U.S.?

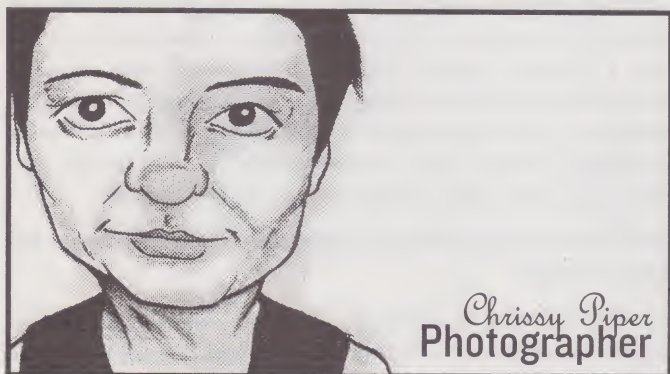
The government has used the September 11th attacks as an excuse to restrict civil liberties, implement racist laws and further its imperialist agenda. For example, The Patriot Act—legalizing everything the cops have been doing secretly since COINTELPRO. The Pentagon's new Office of Information Awareness "Total Information Awareness System"—is an Orwellian nightmare. It will provide access to phone calls, emails, financial records, medical records, travel history, etc. For an asinine comparison, it's like COINTELPRO on crack. War against Iraq—the sanctions have already killed 1.5 million people. Saddam Hussein is of no threat to us, and the government sure as hell doesn't care about the well-being of Iraqi citizens. They just want to replace him with a new puppet ally. Going to war with Iraq will accomplish as much as it did 12 years ago—nothing but more innocent people dead. We should be supporting democratic opposition within Iraq. Plan Columbia/War on Drugs—the war on drugs is bullshit. The US is supplying Columbia and other South and Central American countries with arms and training. I believe the real purpose to be to crush the FARC, the Zapatistas and other political dissent, so it can further exploit the global south.

As an artist, do you feel a need to comment on current events?

We write about things that inspire us and things that disturb us. Almost all of our lyrics are fueled by current events, be it local, national, or international. I would feel ashamed if I *didn't* speak out about the injustices going on in the world today.

Have you ever dealt with criticism or backlash in result to your lyrics, your views or the way in which you choose to operate?

One of the most important lessons I've learned from punk is to question everything. I've been challenged, criticized, called on, threatened . . . I wouldn't want it any other way. I want to always question and reevaluate my beliefs. Once we stagnate, we're dead.



Perhaps best known for her popular photo book, *The Unheard Music*, Chrissy continues to document the underground punk and indie scene through her photography and her unwavering commitment as a supporter and roadie for groups like Tragedy, Selfish, and Harum Scarum. Her freelance photo work appears in various music and culture magazines.

As an artist, do you feel a responsibility to comment on current events?

I don't really feel like it's a responsibility, but more of a *reaction* to the current events. The amount of frustration and anger I have felt over the last 16 months has definitely had an influence on the type of photographs I've been making.

Do you feel there's significance to being visible in dissent against popular opinion?

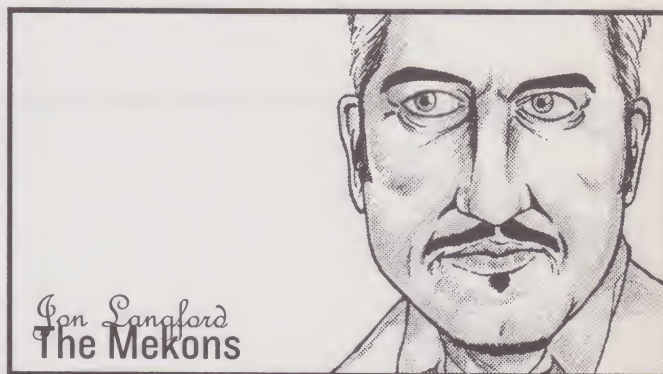
I think it's important that people see there is an opinion that goes against the mainstream. Though there is little media coverage of the anti-war demonstrations, I would hope that those 30 seconds might get a person or two thinking. As uneventful as marches can be, it's important for people to see that not everyone is supporting this war.

What do you find most distressing about the political climate in the US?

The amount of support that Bush is receiving.

Do you feel like underground/alternative music has a part to play in politics?

I know that during the Gulf War seeing bands that had political lyrics really helped me to learn more about the situation—bands like Downcast, who would spend half of their "set" talking to people about what's going on. In turn, I'd go home and read up as much as I could, try to stay on top of it all. A lot of times it seems like bands are preaching to the converted though there is always the chance of that one kid going to his/her first show. Music can open people to ideas they never thought of.



Being in The Mekons, one of the few first-wave British punk bands to both not break up and not suck, is almost accomplishment enough. Langford, however, isn't content to surrender to his own dizzying past discography—one that stretches across countless albums and more than two decades. In recent years he has also played with his band The Waco Brothers, and collaborated with The Sadies, while working with flagship indie labels such as Southern, Bloodshot and Touch and Go.

The media is owned by the corporations it should be exposing for all of their wrongdoings.

Bull Gervasi

Do you feel there's significance to being visible in dissent against mainstream opinion?

Most of the exciting and radical—significant—things going on in politics and culture at present, and maybe always, come from those areas that are pitted against the popular and mainstream in vicious struggles for survival. Visible dissent is fun when it happens, but is usually absorbed by the monster and sold back to us.

As an artist, do you feel a responsibility to comment on current events?

I don't know if it's a responsibility in the sense of a duty or whatever, but I usually do. I just can't stop.

What are some of the barriers that can obscure this sort of message?

If there's any message in what the Mekons or Wacos say it's usually obscured by our pitiful record sales which are in turn a result of our obscurity.

What do you find most distressing about the political climate in the US?

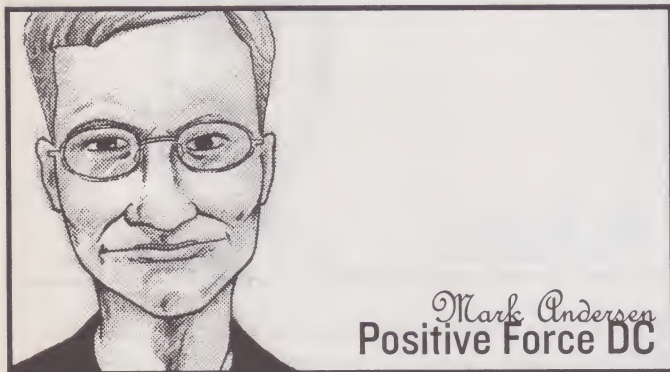
As Mussolini said, the merger of state and corporate power is fascism.

Do you feel like underground/alternative music has a part to play in politics?

In a realistic, non-posturing way, yes.

Do you feel like the pending escalation/war on Iraq is actually what most Americans want?

No.



As co-founder and senior member of the youth-oriented activist group Positive Force DC, Mark has served as a bridge between many different communities, always standing by punk's ability to affect change. While his book, *Dance of Days: Twenty Years of Punk in the Nation's Capital*, passionately recounts a celebrated chapter of the culture's past, Mark insists that the future holds the most potential.

Protest music has been a part of pop and rock music for an easy 50 years now—do you feel like much has changed?

I am reasonably certain protest has been a part of music since shortly after someone first hummed a melody, scratched down

some words, or banged out a chord. It will always be, as long as music actually responds to urgent internal imperatives, not simple money-making designs. Has anything changed? This is a hard question to answer. Much is changing all the time, some of it positive—life-affirming—some of it negative—death-dealing. I don't protest necessarily expecting things to change for the better. I protest because I feel something is wrong. The less I speak, the more implicated in the evil I become. As Howard Zinn wrote, "no one is neutral on a moving train." For me, it's simple: I want nothing to do with Dubya's train to never-ending war and exploitation. To be entirely clear, however, I don't expect songs to change the world. *People* change the world, although songs or other art can—and, in my case, do—give people strength for that struggle.

What do you find distressing about the current political climate in the US?

What *don't* I find distressing is the better question! I will just say that I think the revolutionary America of democracy and human rights is widely respected by people throughout the world, including the vast majority of Muslims. Polls taken in the Arab world since September 11th have certainly consistently shown this to be true, contrary to hysterical right-wing claims that "they hate us because of our freedoms!" Much of the world, however, hates the imperial America of George W Bush trying to have everything his way while pretending we are doing the world a favor! For me, I believe in completing the original—and still unfinished—American Revolution, which was *against* empire and *for* democracy. If we were serious about that, I think pretty much only the dictators of the world would object—after all, a bunch of them would be losing their funding!

If you felt strongly about something would you feel comfortable addressing it in your art?

There are lots of ways to stand for or against problems. You don't necessarily have to write songs or poems or essays about the issue, or do a painting or a film—although there are some great ones out there! Art, for me, rises from life, from a passionate search for meaning, for truth, however cloudy or confused. How could we *not* comment on what life brings to us? ¶ As for those who say politics and art don't mix, I think you might as well say life and art don't mix. There is plenty of hokey trash out there masquerading as profound social comment, I don't deny it, but that is just a failure of the artist. Artists are allegedly—by definition—creative people. If so, we can certainly find ways to take a stand without compromising our art!

What are the barriers between artist and audience that can obscure this kind of message?

I believe everyone is potentially an artist, and that the greatest expression of our art is living truly and well. We all have some power, so we all have some responsibility. I know that artist/audience barriers exist, but I don't acknowledge and thus, don't empower them. Certainly, waiting around for Ian MacKaye, or anyone else, to say what you think needs to be said is bogus. Speak your own mind, live your own life. Life is short, better kick ass—compassionately, of course!



Chad Clark is perhaps best known for his role as singer/guitarist in Washington DC's Smart Went Crazy. For the past few years, however, Chad has served as one of the chief engineers at the legendary Inner Ear studio, claiming the Dismemberment Plan and Fugazi among his production credits. Basla Andolson, a graduate student and activist at Richmond's Virginia Commonwealth University, also plays bass in Del Cielo. Together, Chad and Basla both play in The Beauty Pill.

As an artist, do you feel a responsibility to comment on current events? If so, when? If not, why?

Chad: I'm not so sure about my role as an artist, but I do feel a responsibility as a moral being to speak out about current events. I tend to surround myself with people with similar ethical and political beliefs to my own, and I've recently been thinking about how scary, yet vital, it is to communicate with people who don't already agree me. It's very comfortable to only hold substantive conversations with politically savvy and like-minded individuals, however I think it's important that we open ourselves to other members of the community as well.

Is there significance to simply being visible in dissent against popular opinion?

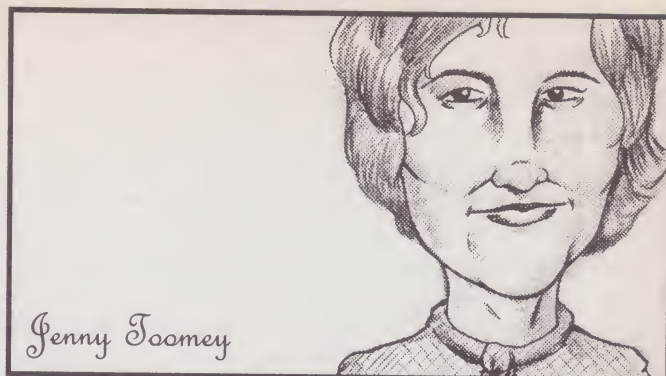
Basla: Being a dissenter is often scary. However, without lonely voices of dissent, humans tend to mindlessly follow the status quo, even when that means approving of "preemptive strikes" or accepting other such Orwellian ideas that seem to be so prevalent today. I do believe that simply being a visible dissenter is important, and not just in terms of dissent from war.

Protest music has been a part of pop and rock music for an easy 50 years now—do you feel like much has changed?

Chad: Protest art is vital for a democratic culture. Without this, there is no record of dissent.

What are the barriers between artist and audience that can obscure this kind of message?

Chad: Money.



If you've self-released your band's 7" at some point, you've probably read Jenny Toomey's *Mechanic's Guide to Putting Out Records*, which she wrote with her Simple Machines co-conspirator Kristin Thompson. Since the days of *Working Holiday* compilations and Tsunami records, Toomey has taken her views on artist autonomy and rights to the floors of Congress with the non-profit group she helped found, The Future of Music Coalition. In addition to her advocacy of independent musicians, Jenny continues to perform and record albums as a solo artist.

Have you ever dealt with criticism or backlash in result to your lyrics or your views?

At Ladyfest Los Angeles, I tried to raise the question of the war. I stood in the middle of a weird Vaudevillian stage and asked the smattering of an audience, "Have a lot of the other ladies been talking about the fact that we are about to go to war?" I was met with a humid silence. I limped forward trying to make connections between war and feminism, and eventually abandoned politics and returned to performing songs. We live in such an anti-political, cynical climate that everyone is *terrified* to take a stand that might make them seem stupid.

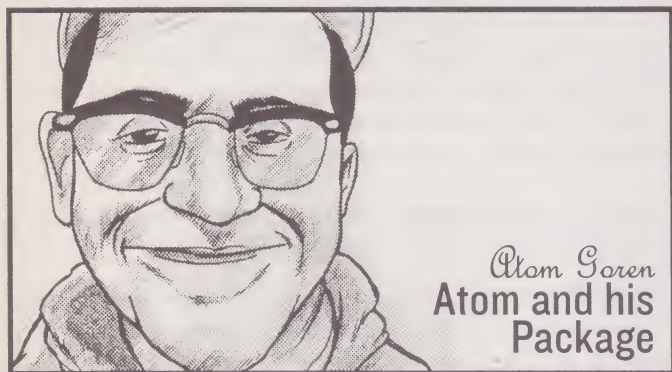
Is there significance to simply being visible in dissent against popular opinion?

I happened to notice that on the top of the Kill Rock Stars Website that it says "Kill Rock Stars Hates War." It's a simplification, sure but a sentiment that deserves repeating—a sentiment maybe I need to put on my website too. I had a conversation with another musician recently and asked him which musicians he respected. He said none of them because none of them were talking about the war. The *minute* he said that, it changed my measure of a respectable musician, which is strange considering the strong political beliefs of so many of the musicians who first drew me to music. How much the climate has changed and how little I'd noticed. I feel like a frog boiling in a pot that never noticed the water getting warmer.

Protest art is vital for a democratic culture. Without this, there is no record of dissent.
Chad Clark

As an artist, do you feel a responsibility to comment on current events?

I do, but "responsibility" is not the word . . . maybe *compulsion*. I probably spend more time doing activism than doing music. So, in many ways, I work through a lot of that in places that are not music. Aesthetically this makes more sense to me than singing anthems. Simple Machines was known for being a political label without the punk aesthetic. We eschewed the armband and the Xerox cover sleeves and ran in the other direction. I knew too much about "revolution" from my work as an activist to be able to use it as a metaphor or to use it lightly. It seemed ingenuine to push to the front of a crowd with fist in air knowing 9/10ths of the audience would all be getting rides in minivans back to the suburbs. It seemed like play-acting or confusing the gesture with the ideal.



Atom's first band, Fracture, will always be remembered by Philadelphians as a classic. When the group dissolved in the mid-'90s, Atom paired up with an electronic sequencer affectionately dubbed The Package. While The Package has now seen several different incarnations, one thing that has remained consistent in Atom's music is his biting wit. This February Atom will release his fourth full-length, *Attention: Blah Blah Blah* on Hopeless Records.

As an artist, do you feel a responsibility to comment on current events?

I tend to be a pretty opinionated person. I think about the current state of the world a bit, so that does come out when I perform, or write songs, but I don't think I feel a *responsibility* as an artist to comment on current events. I suppose it's just that I feel a responsibility as a human being, not as someone who sings songs.

What are some of the barriers that can obscure this sort of message?

I'd assume that most of the time, most people don't really care what I think.

Do you feel there's significance to being visible in dissent against popular/mainstream opinion?

Not just for the sake of being against popular opinion, but because certain things need to be changed. I feel like the people who care about this country and are critical to make it better are the real patriots.

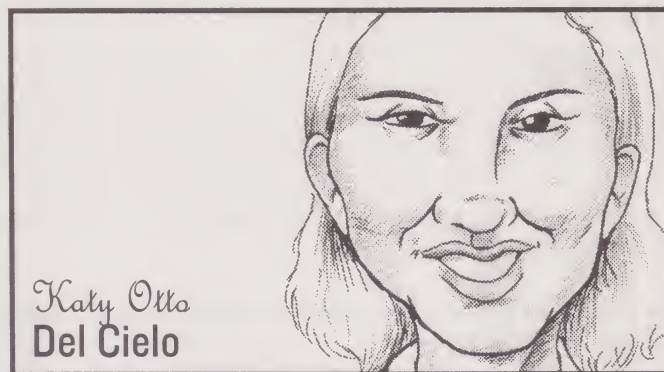
Have you ever experienced a backlash or criticism from expressing your opinions as an artist? How do you deal with that?

I tend to deal with it honestly, and explain that I'm completely OK

with people thinking what they want to think, and while recognizing that right, I too can have an opinion and think you are wrong and are being a fuckhead.

Do you feel like the pending escalation/war on Iraq is actually what most Americans want?

I know that I don't trust this administration at all to make good decisions based on what is good for the most people, or to even think too hard about the consequences of such a war. But I don't know what most Americans want. I certainly feel very out of touch with most Americans a lot of the time.



Having come up in the early '90s Washington DC punk scene, it's not entirely surprising that Katy should start her own record label or play in a band. Believing that process is as important as result, however, Katy's group Del Cielo and her cooperatively run record label, Exotic Fever, eschew convention in favor of their own nourishing self-discovery. When she's not booking a tour or packing records, Katy works at the Empower Project and occasionally contributes to *Punk Planet*.

Do you feel like underground music has a part to play in politics?

Underground music is a rejection of corporation culture. By extension, your involvement in it should extend beyond the shows you play and the records you release to the manner in which you oppose corporate imperialism and state violence in your day to day life.

Protest music has been a part of pop and rock music for an easy 50 years now—do you feel like much has changed?

I think in the punk community, people are realizing that a fun and cognizant element can help. Bands like RAMBO and Against Me understand that politics need to be vital, vibrant and alive to be engaging.

As an artist, do you feel a responsibility to comment on current events?

I cannot help but feel that these events are impacting all of our daily lives and the thread of our emotional fabric and interactions with each other. Even for people like me who play in personal, lyric-driven indie bands, this means what is going on in our world affects how I feel about my friends, daily life and relationships.

What are some of the barriers that can obscure this sort of message?

I really don't like being preached at by bands, or the assumption that because someone has a microphone they should be giving everyone

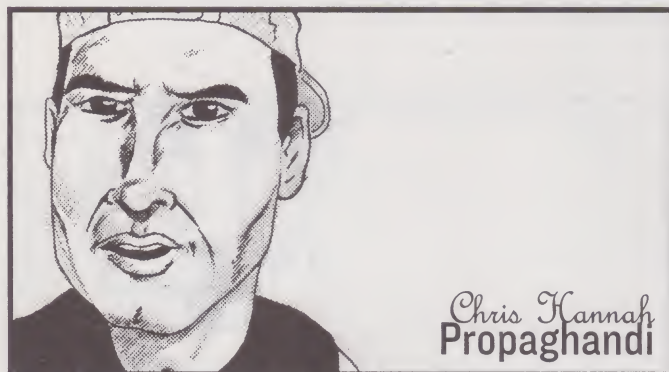
their take on how people should feel about politics. I appreciate it much more when politics comes from a more personal, reflective place. I think it can still do that and remain unapologetic. I also like zines and writing because I feel like that offers a better space for reflection and interaction with an individual reader.

What do you find most distressing about the political climate in the US?

We are currently living in a police state. The Sleater-Kinney song says it best—"dissent's not treason but they talk like it's the same." As a fundraiser at a nonprofit, I am extremely concerned about what will happen to sources of funding for progressive organizations and family planning services in a war climate. Additionally, I am *disgusted* by the flag posturing everywhere, when to me those flags are synonymous with state oppression and imperialism. If you are proud to be an American, then to me it follows that you should *oppose* this war and fight for people to be free from the military violence the US has inflicted for years on Iraq and other countries.

If you felt strongly about something would you feel comfortable addressing it in your art?

If I didn't, I wouldn't be making the art in the first place. My music is part of who I am, my heart and passion. My politics do *not* get left at the door.



Not every band on Fat Wreck Chords invites members of the radical group MOVE to speak at its concerts. Since playing their first show in 1991, the members of Propagandi have demonstrated a preternatural skill at fusing progressive politics with anthemic, up-tempo punk and '80s speed metal. Guitarist and vocalist Chris Hannah also helps run Winnipeg's G7 Welcoming Committee, an indie punk label boasting releases from The Weakerthans' Greg MacPheerson and Hiredsukan.

As an artist, do you feel a responsibility to comment on current events?

As a human being born into a world that I perceive to be dominated by total assholes, I often feel compelled to register the odd useless complaint.

Do you feel there's significance to being visible in dissent against popular/mainstream opinion?

If that visibility translates into expanding numbers of people mobi-

I feel like the people who care about this country and are critical to make it better are the real patriots.

Atom Soren

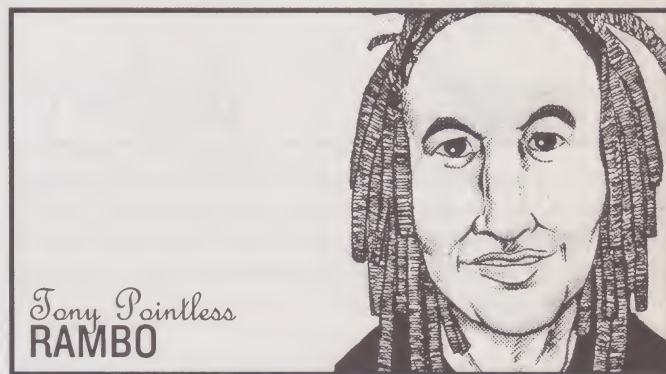
lizing to defang the assholes, then yes. Otherwise, no.

Have you ever experienced a backlash or criticism from expressing your opinions as an artist? How do you deal with that?

In a best case scenario, I try to listen carefully to opposing viewpoints and respond with respect, honesty and thoughtfulness. In a not-so-best-case scenario, I have been known to slap the offending child.

Do you feel like the pending escalation/war on Iraq is actually what most Americans want?

I couldn't fuckin' care less what Americans want. America has always gotten what it's wanted, whether by extortion or murder, so it's time for America to shut the fuck up and listen to the rest of the world for once. The majority of the planet and especially the people of Iraq, who've been living under the shadow of American-led military and economic brutality—don't want this absurd war. That should be the end of discussion.



Tony is well-known as one of the main organizers and residents of Philadelphia's Stalag 13 warehouse. In the mid-'90s, this unlicensed space served as an anchor for a strong, DIY punk scene and a stage for a diverse range of groups from His Hero is Gone and Spazz to Reggie and the Full Effect and Karate. Tony now sings for the band, RAMBO. The band is currently on a two-month tour of Europe, spreading its unique mix of politics, humor and theatrics. As his responses indicate, compromise and mainstream apologists have yet to usurp all of the underground.

Do you feel there's significance to being visible in dissent against popular/mainstream opinion?

That's why I'm a fucking punk. I feel it is *extremely* important to be

visibly against popular/mainstream opinion. People need to be reminded, if not made aware, that there is a part of the population opposed to what's going on.

As an artist, do you feel a responsibility to comment on current events?

For me it's not so much a responsibility as much as current events effecting how I'm feeling and what's on my mind. With what's going on right now I almost feel that some other subjects aren't as important. It's hard to write about venues being shut down when AC-130 gunships are unleashing their hellish volleys on weddings. I have to remind myself to keep writing about that's happening locally and even personally. Wars are often started to distract from what's going on at home.

What do you find most distressing about the political climate in the US?

I think what bothers me most is people's disinterest in politics. I honestly don't believe these sorts of questions cross the average person's mind. It's the most depressing and daunting problem because I don't know how to change it. How can you change people's opinions when they don't have any?



As one of two guitarists/vocalists for Q and Not U, Chris' DC roots connect him to a rich history of politically-fueled punk music. While his band refuses to stagnate in any one sound, Chris' often esoteric lyrics are backed not only by an impressive social awareness, but by a unique sense of bridge-building and hope.

Do you believe underground/alternative music has a part to play in politics?

I know that the punk scene was founded on the idea of extreme confrontation, but I feel like independent culture needs to take a turn towards including others. Is there a way to make our politics more inviting without compromising them? How can we stir people up without scaring them off? These are the issues we face in the underground music scene, and more importantly, society at large.

Do you feel like the pending war on Iraq is actually what most Americans want?

At the end of the day, every American wants to feel safe and secure. Right or left, rich or poor, nobody likes danger. Our country is united by fear. Knowing this, our government employs all kinds of scare-tactics to convince us that a war with Iraq will bring us safety

and prosperity. If the public knew the true extent of the damage we're doing, and the nightmarish legacy we're creating, things would be different. So don't be afraid.

As an artist do you feel a responsibility to comment on current events?

I truly hope that more bands will step up and voice their political views, but only if they're sincere. I sometimes feel that the hardcore scene often voices its politics out of this weird, ritualized sense of obligation, rather than out of personal commitment. This can really weaken the voice of dissent. Let's voice our opinions out of love for our fellow humans, not out of anger at their miseducation.

What are the barriers that can obscure this sort of message?

Externally, the barriers are everywhere. Americans want to consume news and culture that reinforce our nation's fortress mentality. Internally speaking, things are befuddling. Our underground music culture is finally starting to crawl out of its cynical/irony-age, but I still feel that people don't know what to make of raw convictions, political or personal. It seems overtly political bands often make people really uncomfortable. It's bizarre and puzzling. I've often heard the "preaching to the converted" argument, but what are the converted doing? Why the hell are people lining up to fawn over the faux-politics of International Noise Conspiracy, and then clammimg-up when the Quails start talking about bombs in Iraq?



One half of the indie duo Secret Stars and collaborator with Ivory Coast and The Holy Childhood, Jodi has plenty of music under her belt. Meanwhile, she is also an accomplished visual artist and graphic designer. Additionally, Jodi curates an artist open house at Rhode Island's Narragansett Grange, which she purchased and renovated with fellow Secret Star Geoff Farina.

Do you feel like the pending escalation/war on Iraq is actually what most Americans want?

With every effort to be objective, my answer is still NO. Not that polls are definitive, but the LA Times reported on December 17th that according to the 1,500 people it surveyed—60 percent were Republican—two-thirds were against the war. I was heartened by the steadily growing public opinion against it. I'm especially heartened to

read about smaller-scale efforts. People of all affiliations—veterans, businesswomen, soccer dads, Rastafarians, etc.—banding together to lobby to city councils and legislators as a unified voice against the war. The average citizen seems to think that Bush has not provided enough evidence to support attacking Iraq and that it's a distraction tactic. For now it seems war is not the answer for most Americans.

As an artist, do you feel a responsibility to comment on current events?

I was about to write "more than ever," but I've never even *remotely* lost sight of my responsibility to let my presence be felt as one against the greed/bloodlust/violent fear-engine. I try to do this in everyday aspects of my life as well as in the arts. The heavier obligation is to stay aware and well informed in the time-consuming process of making art and the lack of trustworthy news media.

What are some of the barriers that can obscure this sort of message?

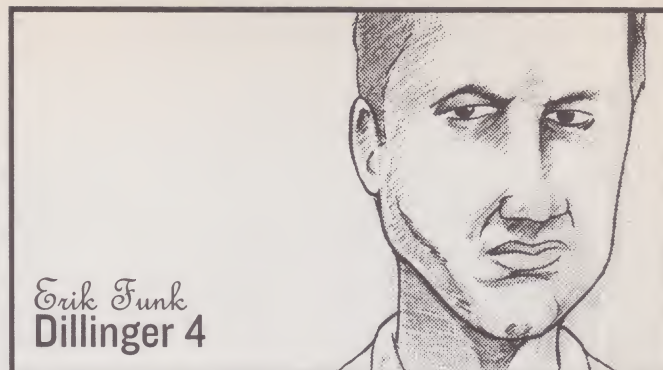
The fear engines, industry alliances, and political powers are impenetrable and unscalable. They ally to create statements of the day, the year, the century and though we do not wish to have a part of it or operate within those parameters, our screams can seem muted and our best efforts commodified or ignored. The barriers are immense—that's why we go underground. The statements seem definitive, yet they do not define us, and the barriers set us up for a lifetime of working against the mainstream. We can't lose steam—we have to infiltrate sensibilities on a small scale with our stances, eloquence, passion, creativity, steadfastness and belief that, occasionally, a passer-by or a group will take a moment with one of our messages.

Do you feel there's significance to being visible in dissent against popular/mainstream opinion?

In every way. I come just shy of slathering my face with anti-war paint every day. I've felt the need to present myself as a human "against." I leave that open because in so many ways I'm simply "against." I've been making hats for my friends to wear that are in some ways crowns for their glorious ways of standing up to the gross-sphere with stealth and vision, and also to inspire them to act accordingly in these trying times. I've always been one to wear it on my sleeve, literally, and make everyday actions part of the art project that is my life.

Do you feel like underground/alternative music has a part to play in politics?

Yes. Not solely for the capacity for positive change it can have on a group, but also for listeners who had felt alone in their struggle and who could be empowered by the message in music. The reality of this world is brutal—I remember awakening to it conscientiously when I entered my early teens. I would have cracked under the pressure of my fears and loneliness if I'd not seen the art and heard the music of Crass or inhaled the alternate reality offered by Prince or Stevie Wonder. We should all be working on challenging the inherent evils and expressing visions of the alternate realities that could be beautiful. We have to rejuvenate each other in order to keep strength alive.



Most bands—even most punk bands these days—are too career-minded to entrust such a hefty share of singing to their most belch-throated member. So it is that Dillinger 4's St. Paddy seems the perfect tool to keep any pesky aspirations at crossover at bay. Guitarist/vocalist Erik Funk serves as a cute, on-key foil to the band's ferocity. As his answers illustrate, there's plenty setting the Dillinger 4 apart from its peers.

As an artist, do you feel a responsibility to comment on current events?

When I was younger, my eyes were opened to so many issues via punk rock music that the ideas of social commentary and punk are almost inseparable to me.

What are some of the barriers that can obscure this sort of message?

Rock 'n' Roll, and, in my opinion, punk rock are about fun, so I think many people lose interest when you take that element out of music and performance.

What do you find most distressing about the political climate in the US?

It is clear that the American people are willing to give up more and more of their privacy and civil liberties every day. This is very much a result of fear tactics and propaganda coming from the government and propagated by the media. The recent Patriot Act is the most obvious example of this. The truth is, once these powers are granted to government agencies, they are not going to be returned when the "war on terrorism" is won. Just like your rent will never go back down after the landlord has raised it to cover temporary rises in expenses.

Do you feel like underground music has a part to play in politics?

Not especially. Underground music can bring ideas to light, and the underground culture can put those ideas into practice, but frankly, mainstream music will *always* be a more significant political force in my—perhaps overly cynical—opinion.

Do you feel like the pending escalation/war on Iraq is actually what most Americans want?

Americans simply don't want to be afraid. We are not accustomed to it. I think that most Americans do not particularly want war, they just want to believe that a solution exists, and they will accept war because they are told that it is a solution. ©

Our country is united by fear.
Chris Richards

"Joe Strummer's voice has always seemed to be everywhere. That voice was more than a teacher, more than a parent, more than a cassette or a record or a video. From the moment we first heard it, it was as if it had always been here." —Ted Leo

"RIP Joe." For weeks following the unexpected death of Joe Strummer, e-mails cluttered my in-box with those six letters in the subject line. Some were from friends, some were from total strangers, some were from people I hadn't heard from in years—but no matter who they were from, all of them seemed to understand the loss I was feeling after hearing the news. At a mere 50 years young, Joe Strummer was found dead in his Somerset home, victim of a heart attack.

Since you've picked up *Punk Planet* I don't think I need to tell you why this was such a sad and heart-wrenching loss. Surely you can throw on *London Calling* or the first Clash record and you can hear that loss yourself. While countless magazines over these past few weeks have eulogized Strummer—tying up his life's story with a nice, agenda-less bow—none of them have been able to convey those emotions the way his songs suddenly can. They sound sadder now, less angry. In fact, they sound a lot like all of us.

In a bit of irony that I imagine Strummer is currently grinning at boulevard-wide, it may have taken his death for all of us to notice just how important a voice he was in this punk revolution. He was the voice of this underground community that so many of us remain a part of. And, like all of us, Joe didn't choose punk—punk chose him. Honestly, I don't know if there was ever a better spokesperson for *us* than *him*.

He was a better spokesperson than I am, that's for sure. With that in mind, I think I'll save all of us another long-winded, biographical sketch of the man's importance. Not because I didn't love him or because I didn't respect him or even because I didn't know him—but because that's the way I think he would have liked it.

What follows, then, is a sharing of what others have shared with me. These are their stories, their memories, their tributes to a man who there many never be another one like. Wherever you are Joe, keep smiling. We'll miss you, mate.

Edited by **Trevor Kelley**

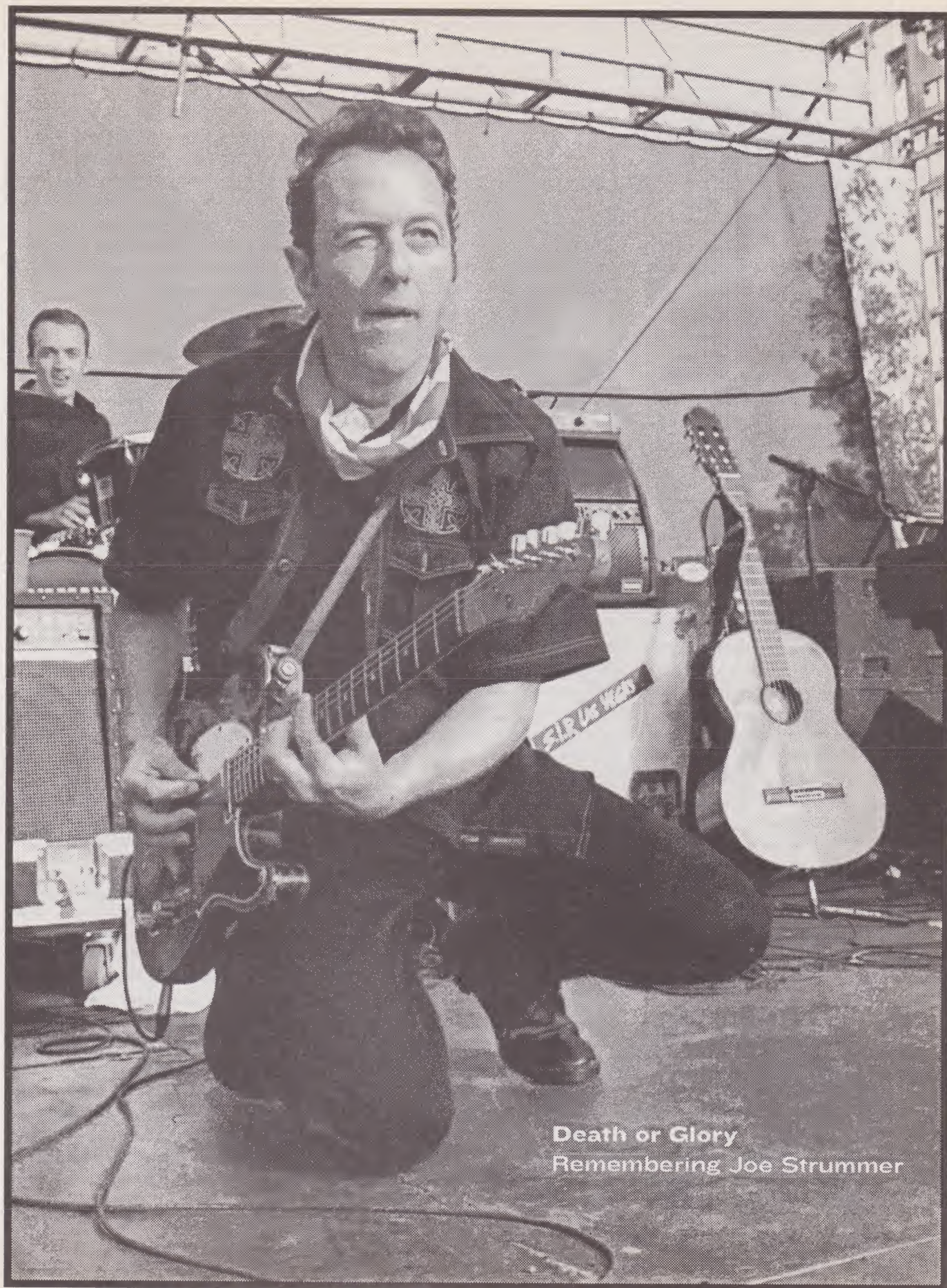
Photo by **Eric Rife**

I met Joe Strummer in October of 2001. Sitting in the Explosion van, parked outside of the Worcester Palladium, trying to figure out if I was parked legally, a familiar face strode up to the driver's side and offered me a handshake.

"You're in the opening band, eh?"

Within a second, I realized who it was. I was shell-shocked. Joe Strummer came up to me, to our shitty maroon van, with a half-smile on his face, and shook my hand. Beaming, the other guys introduced themselves to someone who, from the late 1970s up until his early death, was and will be one of the most universal heroes of the punk movement and a major influence on the underground musicians of today and tomorrow.

To me, Joe Strummer feels like family. He's like a cool uncle, perhaps, or an older friend who takes you to the record store for the first time or tells you stories about Johnny and Sid on the *Anarchy* tour. When he died I immediately felt that sense of regret, that sense of things left undone that happens when anyone or anything dies,



Death or Glory
Remembering Joe Strummer

magnified to the familiar. So what did I do?

I put on the first Clash LP and turned it the fuck up.

—Sam Cave of the Explosion

I never met Joe Strummer. I never shook his hand. I never even saw him play. That didn't stop me from respecting him and admiring him, though. To me, I knew Joe Strummer.

Music is the strongest conductor of passion I know and Joe Strummer was part of a group of people that made me play music for more of a reason than just playing music. Strummer and the Clash opened me up to the combination of music and politics—a combination that will influence me for as long as I live. His music and message will go on forever through the hearts and passions of those he inspired and he will be immeasurably missed.

—Jim Ward of Sparta

On August 22, 1982, I went with a bunch of friends to see Elvis Costello perform at the Cape Cod Coliseum. I know that because it's the only ticket stub I've ever saved. It was my lucky day. The Clash were on the *Combat Rock* tour and were opening for Costello. When they started, a huge pit began below us, and being feisty high school students, we felt the only place for us was down there. Clawing our way to the front row, we clung to the stage for the whole set, even as things got crazy; even after being bitten in someone's attempt to oust me from my position.

I've often read about how the Clash were "tired" and "washed up" on that tour—but that means nothing to me. I had a complete visceral reaction to their performance and believe it played a role in shaping my musical path. I felt numb when I read about Joe Strummer's death. In my mind he'll always be the vital 30-year-old I saw that day.

—Kim Coletta of Desoto Records

In my teenage search for inspiration I encountered Joe Strummer. He whispered in my headphones and sang to the walls wherever I was going, wherever I was. Listening to the Clash, I felt cared for and cared about. That feeling for me is the nature of punk—for music and culture that thinks,

inspires and cares. His integrity and spirit always impressed me—it radiated out and was visible to anyone. Joe Strummer, I never knew you but I know I'll always have you.

—Christopher Applegreen of the Pattern

"People are nuts," Joe Strummer remarked to me in October of 2001. I had traveled to New York to interview one of my heroes, the former Clash leader. Meeting Strummer was fascinating; nominally the bandleader, Joe was the least dictatorial frontman I've ever seen, urging his mates to insert their own musical twists into the arrangements. Musical talent and generous nature aside, though, one of Joe's greatest gifts was the intuitive way he accepted the spotlight while deflecting it just enough to illuminate things more important than mere celebrity.

Our interview—which took place backstage at Irving Plaza before a Mescaleros gig—at times seemed more like a debate, as he was quick to put me straight on things, and he clearly bristled when I uttered the dreaded phrase "spokesman for a generation." Joe, who'd been nursing a cold and was sipping herbal tea in between deep drags from his roll-ups, fixed me with a glare, walked over to a trash can and hocked up a noxious-looking wad of black goo, then barked into my face: "I'm not a spokesperson! Never was to anybody. They can hose off, man."

Amen, brother.

—Fred Mills of Magnet magazine

Oh, the bonds we made. Oh, the songs we sang. You don't have to play the songs, they're here to this day. "Clash City Rockers" as we wake up. "White Riot" as we go out on a Friday night. "Armageddon Time" as we drive home on a Saturday morning. "Safe European Home" as we make mixtapes for our friends. "Janie Jones" as we dance. "Cheat" as we lip-synch in the mirror. "Death Or Glory" as we wait in line at the bank. "Spanish Bombs" as we lock up after work. "Tommy Gun" as we walk out into the sun. "London Calling" as we walk out into the rain. Joe Strummer's voice has always seemed to be everywhere. That voice was more than a teacher, more than a parent, more than a cassette or a record or a video.

From the moment we first heard it, it was as if it had always been here.

And now? It's the same, really. As we started to get older, it started feeling like we were able to think of Strummer as a peer. His songs developed another aspect. Something got more specific. His voice became that of someone we could sit down with, have a laugh with, and stoke the fires of each other's rants over a drink or a meal. And just as that shift was happening, the man was taken—but fuck if his voice isn't still here.

—Ted Leo

A week before Joe Strummer died, I lost a dear friend to cancer. My friend, Nilak Butler was a great activist in the Indigenous community and she taught me the true meaning of revolution. It's odd to lose two friends at once—one that knows you, one that doesn't. When Nilak and her husband Dino Butler were fugitives from the federales after the incident at Oglala, Joe was singing "London's Burning" and "I'm So Bored With The USA." Nilak didn't tap into the mainstream, she had the disadvantage of being a woman and being an Indian. But her work was the work that Joe celebrated: the underground movement to protect human rights and to make governments, corporations, and the military industrial complex accountable for their greed and abuses.

Joe was a revolutionary too. And that's what I learned from the Clash—the importance of a pop hook with your own words of revolution.

Not long after I discovered the Clash, I discovered the activist, revolutionary world. It took me a long time as a folk singer to figure out how to merge the lessons from the Clash with the lessons from my indigenous mentors. But now I have such a wealth of information and sounds that I could spend the rest of my days being an activist and writing songs and I would never run out of inspiration. For this I am thankful.

I don't know how to grieve someone I don't know—but I do know how to play my guitar and sing at the top of my lungs.

—Amy Ray of Daemon Records
and the Indigo Girls

It seems so shocking that Strummer is dead. I wasn't a friend of his, but having met him a few times I don't think there was anyone I knew who seemed more alive.

We talked a lot about his life in an interview for *The Big Takeover* but, in the end, what I might remember most is not even found in that interview. It's when the check at the Broome Street Bar came for lunch and drinks, and he insisted on paying it. We ended up arguing about it for two minutes, before I won by saying, "I won't let you pay for this! If it wasn't for the music and lyrics you wrote and the stances you took, there wouldn't even have been a *Big Takeover*. We would have never started it, having had no ambition to be music writers—and we certainly wouldn't still be doing one today, two decades later."

This, indeed, he had to give me.

I never got to buy Ray Davies a drink, but I bought one for Joe Strummer.

—Jack Rabid of *The Big Takeover* magazine

Joe Strummer was my very first teenage hero. When I was 16, I carved four pumpkins that looked like the *Combat Rock*-era Clash (a mohawk for Joe, a fedora for Mick, slicked hair for Paul) and delivered them to their hotel in LA with my older sister Cathy. Being young and pretty stupid, I hadn't thought of the fact that the English don't celebrate Halloween. Joe came down and very warily asked if he was supposed to "put candy in it." I was mortified. He sort of hid behind a column looking at these four Jack-O-Lanterns sitting on an expensive rug and these two young obsessed fans, probably thinking what a strange place America is.

With Joe in the world I felt at least there was one guy who could be our ultimate bullshit detector, who could lead with his insight, who could speak out and make mistakes, and be human and superhuman at the same time. His spirit was an inspiration—and totally unique and thrilling.

—Janet Weiss of *Sleater-Kinney*

About 10 years ago a couple friends and I went to see Joe Strummer perform at the Palladium in New York. Afterwards we got a six-pack, waited for our hero, and passed the time singing old Clash songs. When

Strummer arrived, he immediately walked over and started talking to us. We couldn't believe it. Why would Joe Strummer ever want to waste his time on us?

We asked him if he could recite the beginning of "Clampdown." After pausing for a bit to remember, he recited the whole thing—and then, in a move that changed my life forever, he handed over his guitar and taught us the song's chords. There we were, in the middle of 14th Street, playing "Clampdown" on Joe Strummer's guitar. Later he invited us to join him at the Cat Club, but we couldn't go—we were far too overwhelmed.

To me the Clash's contribution to music outweighs everyone else's. Their influence will be heard forever. Joe



"With Joe in the world I felt at least there was one guy who could be our ultimate bullshit detector, who could lead with his insight, who could speak out and make mistakes, and be human and superhuman at the same time." —Janet Weiss, *Sleater-Kinney*

Strummer was a passionate and generous individual—and he proved that just because you're a rock star that doesn't mean you have to be a jerk.

—Anthony Roman of *Radio 4*

I never really met Joe Strummer, although I did ask him to dance with me in a nightclub in Leeds in the early '80s. He was very gracious about accepting, but never said a word. I think I just wanted to touch him.

The Clash seemed like movie stars to me. They were larger than life—more stylish and rock'n'roll than everyone else. Somehow they pulled that off without losing their credibility, managing to be both mainstream and radical at the same time.

I can't help but admire the fact that Joe Strummer never reformed the Clash, despite immense pressure to do just that. He had the good sense to know that the Clash belonged to a particular moment in time, and that their influence is stronger

because of it.

Joe's sudden death brought that whole era back into sharp focus. I remember how idealistic and confused we all were and how excited we were to be part of a movement of our own. It reminded me of how it felt to be young—and how much things have changed.

—Sally Timms of *the Mekons*

I'd like to say thank you to Joe Strummer, who left this world a better place for having been in it. He remains the perfect model for passion and character, overcoming station and circumstance. Who else could straddle the gutters of London and the slums of Kingston without splitting their trousers? Always an advocate for diversity and eclecticism,

Strummer dared to suggest that revolution was not only necessary, but might also be fun and great. Revolution of self, the overthrow of bloated pseudo-wisdom and callous state powers; he seemed to believe this could all be accomplished with a guitar—or a brick—as well as a willing cohort. For better or worse, he caused thousands to take up the guitar and no doubt created a compelling soundtrack for some ripe brick tossing.

What I find most inspiring about Joe Strummer are the crazy chances he took. He seemed to be in a constant state of radical evolution—shedding skins and burning hot toward new suns. So, whenever anyone dismisses my latest incarnation as a "misstep," I think of Strummer and *Sandinista!* and take courage in his example. I raise a glass to Joe Strummer for going through and not around—but also for growing a beard and moving to Paris when he should have been on tour.

—Blake Schwarzenbach of *Jets To Brazil* ©

The Kids aren't Alright



There was once a land where DIY venues, bookers, and bands lived in harmony. Then an entertainment giant decided it wanted to live there too and all was not well in the land anymore. This is a tale of that land.



By Julie Gerstein Illustration by Kristen Ferrell



e've never had a noise complaint

Early last July, Sean Agnew and his company R5 Productions ran headlong into a metaphorical brick wall. Agnew, a long-time promoter of indie and punk all-ages shows in Philadelphia, received a surprise visit from the Philadelphia Department of Licenses and Inspections during an Engine Down/Orchid/Atom and His Package show. (L & I is the city office responsible for enforcing building, fire, housing, business, and zoning regulations.) Finding nothing wrong, the inspectors left and the show resumed. Four days later, however, on Friday, July 12, four L & I officials showed up again at the First Unitarian Church, where *The Explosion*, *The Curse* and *The Boils* were slated to play that night. Citing minor building safety violations and the fact that the church and Agnew lacked proper entertainment zoning and licenses, officials demanded that R5 shut down immediately.

While the building safety violations were eventually dropped, the church remained closed to shows. L & I is a complaint-driven entity, and neither Agnew nor the Church were ever contacted about a complaint, zoning or otherwise, prior to the shut down (Agnew had been operating out of the Unitarian Church for six years). "We never had a noise complaint or problem with the neighbors, vandalism or complaints from the church administration," he says. "The fact that the church was shut down because of improper zoning meant that someone took the time to research the zoning of the church, and I doubt an angry resident would bother with something like that." Agnew says that the head of the local Center City Resident's Association assured him that none of her constituents had ever voiced a concern or complaint about the church shows, and that businesses had profited from the influx of kids in the community.

A week after the First Unitarian Church shutdown, Agnew attempted to move his previously scheduled shows to The Rotunda, a West Philadelphia entertainment venue owned and operated by the University of Pennsylvania. Mysteriously, L & I was again called. And though the shows were not technically being produced by R5 Productions and the club owned the necessary licenses, L & I demanded that the shows be canceled.

And things only got worse. Several days later, yet another call was placed to L&I's offices, tipping them off that a local record store (where Agnew worked) was selling tickets to R5 shows at cost without a proper ticket license. L & I threatened to shut the record store down unless the proper licenses were obtained, even though the store was not profiting from the ticket sales.

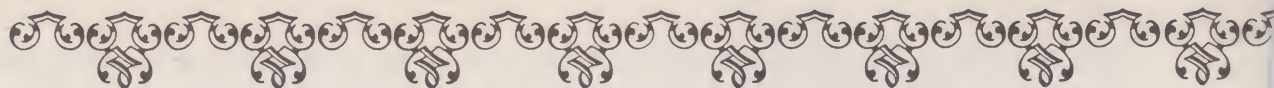
Agnew contends that his problems began during a booking war with a local Clear Channel venue over a show for singer/songwriter Ben Kweller. Agnew offered Kweller's agent less money than the local Clear Channel-run Theater of the Living Arts. Even so, says Agnew, "they turned down the offer to play the TLA in order to play a smaller, cooler room."

This, he claims, is what ignited Clear Channel's fury against R5 Productions. Even after shows at the First Unitarian Church were shut down, and as Agnew was scrambling to find alternative spaces to hold all-ages events, Kweller's agents chose to stick with R5 Productions. Clear Channel continued to offer Kweller's agents more and more money to move the show to the TLA. In fact, Agnew says TLA held the date open for the Kweller show on their August calendar.

In the aftermath of the church shut down, booking agents began talking with Agnew, sharing their beliefs that Clear Channel had a hand in shutting R5 down. "One agent went so far as to say that it was definitely them, and that he was going to write them a letter letting them know that his booking agency would never book a show at a Clear Channel venue again," says Agnew.



Obviously, we don't believe Clear Channel Entertainment to be a large, undead monster eating pigs. In fact, we're sure they're all fine people just trying to make their way in the world. Pay no attention to the man behind the curtain—we just went with the fairy tale thing and ran with it. So please, don't sue. Seriously. Thanks.



W e give consumers access to artists and marketers access to consumers

Clear Channel Communications' roots lie with former Texas radio shock jock L Lowry Mays. Mays and his partners formed Clear Channel in 1972, after buying out several radio stations in the San Antonio area. The corporation grew over time and today Clear Channel

owns more than 1,200 radio stations, 120 entertainment venues, 37 television stations, and nearly a million billboards.

According to their company's official position statement, Clear Channel serves to help their clients "distribute their marketing messages in the most efficient ways possible. We believe our ultimate success is measured by how well we assist our clients in selling their products and services. We have assembled a national platform of media assets designed to provide the most efficient and cost-effective ways for our clients to reach consumers." Or, as Channel Entertainment's Senior Vice President of Public Relations Howard Schacter puts it: "We give consumers access to artists, and marketers access to consumers."

That formula has allowed the company to grow with unparalleled speed and precision. Virtually unheard of before the mid-'90s, Clear Channel shot to success thanks to the Telecommunications Act of 1996, which deregulated radio ownership. Theoretically intended to increase competition, and therefore improve the quality of radio programming, the Act has had the opposite effect on the industry. Rather than freeing up bandwidth, says Mark Lloyd, executive director of the Civil Rights Forum on Communications Policy, passage of the act allowed natural corporate competitors to merge instead of compete.

Prior to the passage of the Telecommunications Act, says Lloyd, "no single company owned more than 80 stations nationally." Just six years later, Clear Channel owns 15 times that.

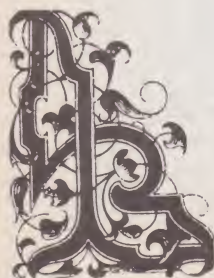
The speed and voracity with which Clear Channel has grown as a company worry many. Hannah Sassaman, who works with Philadelphia's Prometheus Radio Project, an initiative to increase the numbers of low-power and community-run radio stations, says that Clear Channel's hold on the radio industry takes power away from individual communities. "Clear Channel homogenizes radio and not only controls what music we listen to, but because they control the news feeds on their stations, what information we have access to." In response to Clear Channel and the overarching problem of radio consolidation Sassaman and other Prometheus volunteers started CheapChannelRadio.com, a site that mocks big business' control of the airwaves.

This past October, Prometheus and other media advocacy groups participated in the Reclaim the Media conference and held a counter-demonstration to the National Association of Broadcaster's meeting. Radio consolidation, Sassaman says, needs to be understood, "because it has a direct affect on what we hear and how power is divided."

The Future of Music Coalition, a not-for-profit collaboration between members of the music, technology, public policy, and intellectual property law communities, agrees. Last November they released a review of the 1996 Telecommunications Act and radio deregulation. The report found that "as a

result of deregulation, the public has lost the benefits of diverse, community-based radio that had broader access for citizens and musicians. In return, the public got a small set of potentially unstable nationwide radio conglomerates." Further, 80 percent of the people polled by the Coalition want to see action to prevent further deregulation of radio. The report strongly recommended that the FCC and Congress limit its support of the Act and work to strengthen regulation as a public resource.

Nationwide, Clear Channel currently controls around 60 percent of rock radio stations, as well as growing percentages of country, easy listening, and talk radio. Their burgeoning success in the radio business allowed the Clear Channel to branch out into other markets and mediums. In 2000, the corporation acquired SFX Entertainment, the country's largest integrated promotion, event management and venue operations company. In SFX they gained interest or ownership of 120 venues in 31 cities and in 2001



produced more than 26,000 live events that generated about 70 percent of the overall concert ticket revenue in the US.



just scratch my head

Clear Channel's ownership of both radio stations and concert venues gives the company an unfair advantage, critics contend. Perhaps the most well-publicized case of Clear Channel allegedly wielding its power over artists is that of Britney Spears. Spears chose to book her 2001 arena tour with Clear Channel's competitor Concerts

West and quickly saw her music being removed from Clear Channel radio playlists across the country. Fans took notice and began an online petition to have Spears' music returned to the airwaves.

Publicity around the whole debacle led to politicians such as California representatives Howard Berman and Sam Farr to call for a probe into the company. Senator Russ Feingold of Wisconsin recently proposed the Competition in Radio and Concert Industries Act. The Act aims to decrease the number of radio stations one corporation can own and break the stranglehold large corporations have over the radio and concert industry.

Clear Channel denies any wrongdoing in the matter, and claims that the allegations against the company are completely unfounded. "We wish we had the power and influence that our critics claim we have," says Schacter. "There is a popular and unfounded perception that radio has punished artists who don't book their tours with us. This has never been supported by data."

And, while it's difficult to feel much sorrow for Britney, smaller and independent artists are both directly and indirectly affected by Clear Channel radio's dealings with its entertainment division.

Jon Rinaldo runs Joker Productions, a small but steady promotions company that books acts in several varying-sized venues in Pittsburgh. He's been a long-time challenger of Clear Channel and claims that the corporation abuses the relationship between its venue and radio holdings to effectively cut off the competition. He asserts that Pittsburgh's Clear Channel Entertainment Division works in tandem with WXDZ, the city's only rock alternative station, to keep non-Clear Channel promotions off the air. Bands that book through him and other independent promoters, Rinaldo says, are in danger of losing valuable time in heavy rotation and access to on-air promotions.

"Dashboard Confessional is a prime example," he says. "They were in medium to heavy rotation on WXDZ and we told the station that we needed to work with them on show promotion. Once we officially booked the show, Dashboard was put on light rotation and eventually dropped completely."

Because WXDZ has proved to be more of a detriment than an asset to promotion, Rinaldo has been forced to find other means of advertising and marketing, such as print advertising and grassroots street campaigns, though he considers radio the most effective advertising tool. Joker Productions is in the process of filing an antitrust lawsuit against Clear Channel.

Rinaldo also says that Clear Channel's interest extends far

beyond the scope of its average rock radio station. Even bands that are small or unknown are of interest to the corporation. "They battle with us over booking very small artists. I just scratch my head—I question why they waste their time with this." He points to a fierce bidding war he engaged in over a virtually unheard of band on an independent goth and industrial label. "There's no goal for them of developing that artist. At least we're willing to try."

But Clear Channel says that developing indie and emerging artists is a vital part of the corporation's game plan. "The vast majority of the thousands of events we put on in a year feature artists we have never dealt with in radio," says Schacter. "We put them on customized marketing tours and fill up festival line-ups. We have to do that . . . today's emerging and independent band—that's our future."

Indeed, last September Clear Channel announced the launch of the Internet-based New Artist's Network, which, according to the press release, "Helps promising artists bring an unprecedented amount of new music to new audiences."

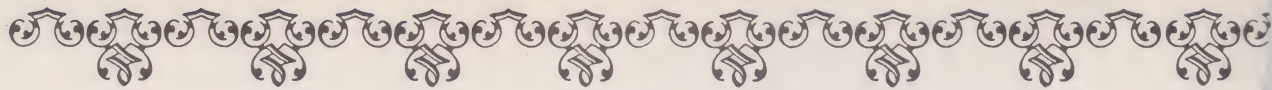


e're not in business to worry about the guy next door

Why might Clear Channel be so interested in booking shows of virtually unheard of bands? It's a general industry standard that if an agent books a band in a particular venue in a given year, that venue then has first dibs on the band in following years.

Says Agnew, "Clear Channel will throw so much money on the line, and take a loss on a small indie band, just to ensure that the band will establish a history with them so that in the future, as that band gets bigger, they'll make more money for Clear Channel. They'll make an offer so ridiculous that smaller promoters can't compete with them."

Dan Yemin, formerly of the bands Lifetime and Kid Dynamite, and currently playing with Paint it Black, believes that Clear Channel is attempting to co-opt the credibility of indie and punk genres. "You'd think there would be all kinds of pieces of the puzzle that would be flying under the radar, but they want to get a piece of even the littlest thing. You might think that small independent shows have nothing to do with Clear Channel . . . But just the same way that Dole Foods is trying to get a piece of the organic food market, and putting smaller organic farmers out of business, so Clear Channel is attempting to do with musicians."



Philly promoter Dave Pianka agrees with Yemin. "They will pay thousands of dollars for smaller bands and then put them in venues too large to fill. So you have a band with a draw of maybe five or six hundred playing a venue with a capacity of 3,500. It affects the quality of the sound and the atmosphere in a detrimental way." Pianka refers to a recent Tortoise show in Philadelphia where Clear Channel employees were actually giving tickets away on the street the day of the show in order to make the room appear filled.

"It's the same thing as a local hardware store trying to compete with Home Depot. They can do things that independent people can't," adds Ron Levick, owner of the thousand-capacity rock club Laga, in Pittsburgh.

But Schacter denies Agnew, Pianka and Levick's claims. "We're not in business to worry about the guy next door," he says. "We don't overbid on bands. There's not a lot of business sense to that. We've brought a new dynamic to the industry, but there's enough room in the industry for everyone. [Other promoters] hate the fact that the world's changing. I understand where they're coming from, but it's not based on today's reality."



These are really hardcore people

Jesse Morreale is the co-owner of Nobody In Particular Presents, an independent promotions company based in Denver and operating in Colorado, Arizona, Utah, Michigan, and New Mexico. In August 2001, NIPP brought a suit against Clear Channel claiming that the corporation developed under-

handed policies that punished bands that played non-Clear Channel venues. Among NIPP's allegations is the claim that bands that play non-Clear Channel venues in Denver are immediately taken off the playlist of Clear Channel-owned radio stations and that Clear Channel radio refuses to play advertising promoting non-Clear Channel events.

Much like Jon Rinaldo's experience in Pittsburgh, Clear Channel dominates the rock radio market in Denver. They own eight radio stations in Denver, including all five of the city's rock and alternative rock radio stations. NIPP's suit alleges that in order for artists to guarantee proper radio promotion and airplay in Denver, touring bands have no choice but to play Clear Channel venues there.

"Agents, managers and record companies are saying we'd like to play your venues, but we can't risk losing our airplay and having a bad

show," says Morreale. NIPP's suit is currently pending, as are several other antitrust suits in Florida, Minnesota and Illinois.

Morreale points to a recent Vans Warped Tour event that NIPP brought to town. He attempted to promote the show via two Clear Channel-owned rock stations, KBPI and KTCL. But, Morreale says, the stations never played the ads that NIPP had purchased. Further, when NIPP gave one of the stations 30 pairs of tickets to give away as an on-air promotion, the station failed to do it and, instead, passed the tickets along to employees of the station and their families.

When NIPP confronted the stations on their poor promotion of the Warped Tour event, adds Morreale, the stations promptly removed all Warped Tour artists from their rotations.

"Clear Channel decided to punish the bands that were on the Warped Tour," he contends. "These are really hardcore people."

Again, Schacter denies that the radio division of the company is at all directed by Clear Channel's entertainment division. "There is absolutely no correlation between the songs Clear Channel Radio stations play and the artists that choose to work with Clear Channel Entertainment. Radio is 100 percent driven by what consumers want to hear. Radio has way too much at stake to let anything else factor in."

But David Viccelli who runs Chicago-based Billions Booking and books tours for Black Heart Procession, The Pattern, as well as Nick Cave and the Bad Seeds says that's not realistic. "Does anyone really believe that Clear Channel isn't going to use their radio division to apply pressure to artists? They deny it, but it doesn't make sense. Businesses need to utilize what they have," he says.



We are a one-stop shop



Clint Sharp, of Fort Smith, Arkansas, launched ClearChannelSucks.com last February. Sharp started the site after reading up on Clear Channel. "I'm not anti-corporate America," he's quick to point out, "but when companies start abusing their powers and their influence in the market,

there's a problem. Clear Channel abuses the synergy between all their markets and stifles artists."

That synergy, Clear Channel's Schacter won't deny, is what makes the corporation so appealing to artists. "We make it easier to go on the road because artist management doesn't have to deal with as many different folks," he says. "We are a one-stop shop."

Many booking agents agree with Schacter's assessment. Eva Alexoiu, who runs Philadelphia's Fata Booking—the agency that books for Pretty Girls Makes Graves, Hot Water Music, and The Blood Brothers—says that booking with Clear Channel can ensure that her bands get what they need. "The ultimate goal of my business is to help my bands survive in this world," she says. While Alexoiu stresses that she wouldn't always use Clear Channel, "I have had great long-standing relationships with a lot of people in the business before they were bought out by Clear Channel, like Ritual in Detroit. Why would I stop working with those individuals just because they are now owned by a larger corporation?" she asks.





Tim Edwards, who runs Flower Booking out of Chicago, represents bands such as Jimmy Eat World, Tortoise, Interpol, and Jets to Brazil. Edwards books in both Clear Channel and independent venues, and agrees with Alexiou that it's important to honor long-standing relationships with individuals and promoters, even if their companies have lately been acquired by Clear Channel. Says Edwards: "We have worked with some of these promoters for almost 10 years and done countless shows with them. Then, these promoters—or more often their bosses—sell the company to Clear Channel. Two days later the promoter calls to make an offer on a band that he has booked several times in the past and now the name of his company has changed and he's a Clear Channel affiliate. Do I not take his call?"

"That said," Edwards adds, "I do think that agents have a responsibility to independent promoters. These smaller promoters are the ones who got involved early in a band's career and helped them to develop, and do a great percentage of our shows."

Booking Agent David Viecegli, concurs. "SFX bought up many of the independent promoters we dealt with. And then SFX was bought by Clear Channel, but still, a lot of our relationships haven't changed."



t was just creepy from the get go.

In a scene that is quick to yell "sellout" and holds other corporate-owned aspects of music production in such disdain, why hasn't there been more talk about Clear Channel's quiet takeover of venues?

"The trouble," says Jade Tree records' Darren Walters says, "is [that] many bands don't know they're playing Clear Channel venues and aren't aware of the potential financial and ethical questions that might raise. A lot of bands just tell their agents to book the tour, and have no clue where they're playing until maybe the day before the show."

In the punk and indie communities, word of Clear Channel has spread very slowly, Walters claims. For Jade Tree, it took the shut down of Philly's R5 Productions last July, before the label learned about Clear Channel's ownership of venues. Last October, in response to the shut down of R5 Productions', Jade Tree co-owners Walters and Tim Owen decided to move their high-profile CMJ showcase from Clear Channel-owned Irving Plaza to independent venue The Warsaw in Brooklyn.

"Clear Channel doesn't affect Jade Tree bands in terms of radio—Jade Tree bands don't get played on the radio anyway," Walters says. "But it does affect us when it comes to venues. Unless you're really on top of stuff, you might only hear of them in passing."

When Jade Tree first announced its decision to boycott Clear Channel, the label received a mixed response. Many people thought that the decision was simply a publicity stunt and the label received angry letters and e-mails from fans. Walters feels that negative attitudes are just a symptom of miseducation. "Overall,



he most important thing to think about is that independent

bands should be promoting independent projects," he says. "If independent promoters aren't around, then Clear Channel and other large corporations will completely determine what artists play and how much they are paid." By reinvesting in independent promoters and venues, says Agnew, "we're ensuring the long term viability of our community."





the indie community is not aware of how serious this issue is, and how bad, in the long run, it will be for bands," he says.

Dan Yemin, whose band Paint It Black is currently recording with Jade Tree, wholeheartedly supports the label's decision. "A lot of kids were saying that corporations like Clear Channel aren't going away, so we may as well deal with them. But you can decide how it's done and how you do business and answer to your own belief. That's one of the main purposes of this community's emphasis on the DIY ethic,"

Walters concurs. "We just wanted to say to our community, 'Look, when we're in control, we're going to do things a little different.'"

But Fata Booking's Alexiou disagrees. She says that bands are growing more comfortable with navigating through the corporation's policies. "I think bands are used to it now. I think they do have a monopoly on the business, but, on the other hand, at Clear Channel you can get a decent payment. A lot of punk bands will totally get ripped off by local kids doing shows. I'm all for kids doing shows but a lot of bands will tour, and tour for a living, and not even get a hundred dollars for a show," she says.

Contrary to Alexiou's belief, Chris Richards from DC's Q and Not U says that the band had a very difficult time getting paid when they played a Clear Channel venue in Baltimore. "They had so many people working at the club . . . they were trying to get out of paying us because they overstaffed the venue and lost money." Eventually, the promoter agreed to pay, but Richards wouldn't repeat the experience. In fact, says Richards, Q & Not U wouldn't have played the show at all had they known who owned the venue.

Dillinger 4 has made it a policy to avoid playing Clear Channel venues. "It was a mutual decision between the band and our booking agent", says the band's guitarist Erik Funk. D4 was recently offered a show opening for the Circle Jerks at a Clear Channel venue, but decided that, "maybe it's inevitable at some point, but there's no reason to start playing them now."

Funk is quick to separate the people from the corporation. "I can't blame the people that work for Clear Channel. A job is a job, especially right now. We just did a tour with a band whose drummer works for Clear Channel, but his band would never play a Clear Channel show."

Dan Yemin and Paint it Black have also made it a policy not to play Clear Channel owned or affiliated spaces, and says that "in the underground community it's absolutely crucial that we have choices. We can't be so insular and pretend that we don't engage in business."

Q and Not U's Chris Richards agrees that the DIY community needs to take notice of Clear Channel's impact. "You can say

these people are controlling culture, but if you don't participate in it then they're not controlling *your* culture. I think it's up to bands to step up and assert themselves and say they don't want to be involved in something like that," he says. "Bands are getting smarter and paying more attention to who is buying their dates and the consequences of that."

Schacter is unmoved by the wave resistance around Clear Channel and says that much of the anti-Clear Channel fervor can be attributed to a general anti-corporate mentality. "Generation Y hates corporate America and their assumption is that big businesses has come into the world of rock and roll," he says. "You really need to be fair with your assessment—if we did not exist, your audience wouldn't have as many shows in their city as they do now."

And as for bands or fans who may have a problem with corporate presence and influence in music, Schacter advises that you get a reality check. "The business environment today dictates that corporate sponsorships are a necessary component of creating revenue. The world has changed. Without marketing relationships, radio music stations would not exist." Clear Channel, he claims, doesn't really profit off of ticket sales but rather makes much of their money from ancillary revenue—that is, from food and drink sales, merchandise, and parking fees.



e don't want to be the only lion in the jungle

"I think the homogenization of art is always a bad thing," says Flower Booking's Edwards. "Competition among promoters, radio stations and venues is best for musicians and fans. It doesn't seem like fostering competition is something that Clear Channel is particularly interested in."

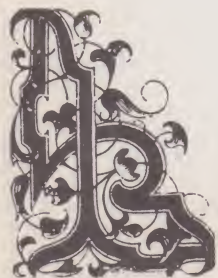
But, Schacter says, competition is a good for business. "The more promoters that are out there, the more people are going to go to live shows. We don't want to be the only lion in the jungle."

But Jeff Perlstein doesn't buy it. Perlstein is the executive director of the Media Alliance, a media advocacy group based out of San Francisco. "Clear Channel thoroughly controls the landscape," he says. "We need to figure out alternative space and forums and support alternative venues. Fostering a critical awareness is part of fostering change."

Perlstein argues that Clear Channel provides entertainment simply as a means of luring audiences to its advertisers. "They are an advertising company and they are selling each of us to the advertisers who are their true clients," he says

For his part, Schacter agrees. "We were created to be a direct benefit to consumers, the artist community and especially our clients—advertisers."

For Clear Channel's critics—these "benefits" add up to something much more detrimental. "When bands play Clear Channel venues, they're ensuring that there will be one large controlling interest that will deem what happens in the music industry," Sean Agnew insists.



To stop this from happening, Perlstein and the Media Alliance advocate that fans let bands and artists know what they think. "The government hasn't shown a lot of interest in the problem," Perlstein says, "so it's really up to the public to make a change."

Cheryl Leanza, deputy director of the Media Access Project, echoes Perlstein's concerns. The Media Access Project is a non-profit public interest telecommunications law firm based in Washington DC. Leanza and her team have gone to bat against Clear Channel and other media giants dozens of times. "Public policy is made in response to people. When fans get educated and when politicians hear that musicians are going to stand up for themselves and not kowtow to the biggest thing in town, things will change."

Clear Channel is well aware of the need to influence future legislation and recently created a new "government relations" position. According to a press release issued from Clear Channel CEO L Lowry Mays, the post is designed to "work closely with lawmakers in Washington to achieve the best policies for the American public and the industries we operate."

The development of this post coincides with discussion over the pending Broadcast-Newspaper Cross-Ownership rule. The rule, as proposed by FCC Chairman Michael Powell (Secretary of Defense Colin Powell's son) would allow for large media conglomerates such as Clear Channel to further their media holdings by purchasing newspaper companies as well and further limit the dissemination and diversity of information, thus increasing the company's vertical cross-market integration.

Even as Americans grow skeptical of Clear Channel, the company is poised to repeat its success in the United Kingdom. Clear Channel UK is already a leader in billboard and outdoor advertising, and if L Lowry Mays has his way, the company will soon rule Britain's airwaves. A bill similar to the FCC's 1996 Telecommunications Act is currently in discussion in Britain. The legislation would deregulate British airwaves and allow Clear Channel to purchase large shares of the market in a matter of months.

"The problem with Clear Channel is there is a terrible lack of diversity," says Suzanne Glass of the Musician's Lobby, an online community forum for discussion of the political and legal issues affecting artists. "Artists stand to lose financially and artistically if Clear Channel is too powerful," she says.

Glass also questions the means by which Clear Channel has become successful. "Much like when Microsoft crushed all the

competition through nefarious tactics, Clear Channel will make the marketplace less and less competitive for the rest of us," she says.

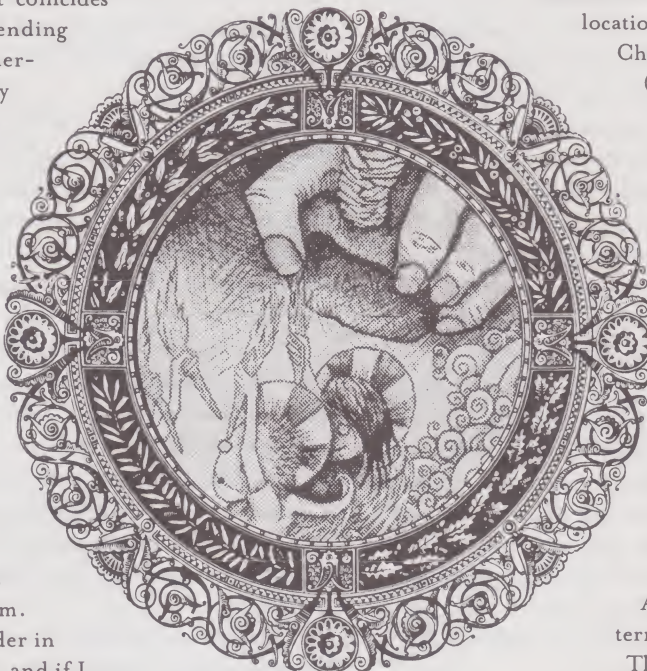
Still, Schacter argues that Clear Channel isn't doing anything that any other large corporation wouldn't do. "The mom and pop coffee shop doesn't like that Starbucks exists. That doesn't mean that Starbucks shouldn't exist. But does it mean that the independent concert promoter needs to think harder about their business? Yes."


After months of booking events at alternative venues and fighting legal battles, Sean Agnew and R5 Productions are once again operating at the First Unitarian Church. Agnew and the church were able to obtain the proper licenses to resume shows at the church's Chestnut Street location. It is still unknown whether Clear Channel had a hand in bringing R5 (temporarily) down. Still, Agnew says, he stands by his belief that big business is bad for independent music.

"The most important thing to think about is that independent bands should be promoting independent projects," he says. "If independent promoters aren't around, then Clear Channel and other large corporations will completely determine what artists play and how much they are paid."

By reinvesting in independent promoters and venues, says Agnew, "we're ensuring the long term viability of our community."

The Media Access Project's Cheryl Leanza thinks that people need to start taking the problem of Clear Channel and media control seriously. "Twenty years ago there wasn't an awareness that shopping at the Gap or buying Nikes was a problem. We have to create a similar sort of consciousness amongst folks about Clear Channel. Supporting Clear Channel venues has a similar harm to our artists. We need to reclaim our media from corporate owners." ©





Getting arrested just isn't what it used to be. Thirty-plus years ago, a bust at a big anti-war protest might land you in jail for a few days and take a reasonable bite out of your wallet—no cause for celebration, certainly, but nothing to derail the rest of your life. Now, however, tangling with the police over politics isn't nearly as casual. Increasingly, law enforcement agencies are going after protesters with new and aggressive tactics: pre-emptive detention of potential high-risk protesters, shadowy intelligence gathering techniques, sky-high bails and penalties, and even super-powerful new legislation like the USA Patriot Act's rules on "domestic terrorism." With war on Iraq potentially only weeks away—and the mass protests that will go with it—there could be a new standard-operating procedure for actions this spring: when activists take to the streets, police take activists to jail.

"The powers-that-be are very very afraid of legitimate dissent, legitimate disagreement," says journalist Patricia Nell Warren who has written a series of articles on our sagging civil liberties. "And the power of the public—the people showing up in front of gates with signs and questions and irritation and anger and frustration—is being dealt with very, very differently. It's not a coincidence that we once again have a war in the offing. They do not want a repeat of the anti-war movement during the Vietnam war."

Even before September 11th—before the Bush administration started taking a hard look at the law books—civil liberties in America were starting to get a little frayed around the edges. It's a situation that upsets the fringe right—the camo-pants-and-tax-evasion lobby—as much as the left, but decades of war-on-drugs fervor and tough-on-crime political rhetoric have still made the legal landscape considerably more inhospitable.

And anybody who decides to step out

on the streets this spring with a protest sign—leaving their dubiously legal face masks, black garb, and Tylenol 3 (unless they're carrying their prescription with them) at home—better be ready for an especially chilly reception. As the activists who found themselves held on \$500,000 to \$1 million bail for misdemeanor charges (typically, it takes some degree of murder or rape to rate six-digits) during the 2000 Republican National Convention found out, this isn't the 1960s anymore. The days of the \$14 fine are long dead, says Warren, which is exactly how the government prefers it.

"There have been people in politics and business who have very quietly wanted to put things in place so this country can never again go through something like the '60s and '70s," she says. "The penalties for *everything* have been ratcheted up. You have people who have committed relatively inconsequential crimes getting nailed for pretty major penalties. On your first arrest, if you get nailed for a felony, your life goes up in smoke."

...

The Patriot Act, quickly passed after the attacks on the World Trade Center, is ground zero for many civil liberties activists. It's pretty much one-stop shopping for every shady legal tweak that the Constitution kept out of the law books before September 11, explains Deborah Caldwell-Stone, deputy director of the Office of Intellectual Freedom, part of the American Library Association.

"The legal history of the Patriot Act doesn't even exist," she says. "Representatives in Congress will tell you they never even got to *read* the whole bill before they passed it. You recall the pressure—another alert day, another alert day—it was very easy to get Congress to approve it. But when the bill came to light, it was all these provisions that had been proposed long *before* September 11th—a wish list of powers that had been denied before, mostly on civil liberties grounds. And they got them in the wake of the attacks."

Civil libertarians point to things like the expansion of the Foreign Intelligence Services Act (FISA), which permits far wider surveillance options and severely limits public access to certain court proceedings, as examples of where the Patriot Act goes wrong. The administration has already started closed-door court proceedings, moving from suspected terrorists to suspected terrorists who happen to be American citizens—an important distinction. And don't forget that the CIA now has the legal authority to kill American citizens, if they happen to be linked to Al-Qaeda, another important distinction.

In many ways, it's a legal way-back trip to the dark days of COINTELPRO, the FBI program that went after the anti-war and civil rights movements of the '60s with a bag full of dirty tricks. Constitutionality? Well, that's just a fancy word that gets in the



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THE WAR COMES HOME

AT PROTESTS THIS SPRING, IT MIGHT BE HARDER THAN EVER TO STAY ON THE STREET AND OUT OF JAIL. BY CHRIS ZIEGLER

ILLUSTRATIONS BY MIKE TWOHIG

way of federal results: during the 1960s, the FBI forged documents and correspondence, maintained an intensely invasive surveillance program, and even sent letters to Dr. Martin Luther King urging him to commit suicide—all on the flimsiest legal and political justification.

The program was discovered in 1971, spurring a congressional committee and all sorts of unpleasant discoveries about what antiestablishment groups from the Black Panthers to nonviolent civil rights activists had been up against. Then, it was scandal:

"Regardless of the unattractiveness or noisy militancy of some private citizens or organizations, the Constitution does not permit federal interference with their activities except through the criminal justice system, armed with its ancient safeguards," Congressman Don Edwards said in 1975. "There are no exceptions. No federal agency—the CIA, the IRS, or the FBI—can be at the same time policeman, prosecutor, judge, and jury. I suggest that the philosophy supporting COINTELPRO is the subversive notion that any public official—the President or a policeman—possesses a kind of inherent power to set aside the Constitution whenever he thinks the public interest, or 'national security' warrants it. That notion is postulate of tyranny."

Now, however, COINTELPRO is an unfortunate and uncomfortable precedent. COINTELPRO-style tactics—federal interference by any other name—persisted into the '80s and '90s, particularly against environmental and civil rights activists (environmentalist Judi Bari and Native American activist Leonard Peltier starred in the most likely and contentious cases). And now, says Caldwell-Stone, the Patriot Act has reversed the post-COINTELPRO legislation. COINTELPRO could, she warns, happen again.

"[There are] rules that force the FBI to always have some evidence of criminal activity before they investigate," she says. "And there has always been a strict separation between foreign intelligence and domestic surveillance. And all those walls have been pulled down by Ashcroft during the last year. We're back to a situation where all those abuses can take place again—if the wrong people are operating the investigations."

• • •

The provision that may hit protesters the hardest—besides the loose wiretap rules and the electronic surveillance and the new definitions of conspiracy—is the appearance of something called "domestic terrorism," which is defined (somewhat nebulously, an ACLU report notes) to include acts "intended to intimidate or coerce a civilian population, to influence the policy of a government by intimidation or coercion, or to affect the conduct of a government by mass destruction, assassination or kidnapping."

And when protesters at the WTO risked first-degree trespassing, disorderly conduct or even pedestrian interference charges simply by walking into the wrong structure (not to mention the recent heavy-duty movement breaking legal tactics recently brought to bear on animal rights and direct action organizations) it's not difficult to imagine how what started as someone's peaceful protest could quickly turn into charges of domestic terrorism. The penalties for various domestic terror-

ism charges range from 10 years in prison to, if fatalities were involved, death.

"What I see is a climate of repression growing, where we as Americans are being encouraged by their government to protest less, to conform more, to tell on our friends and neighbors," says Lance Webster, the founder of a campaign to protect the right to peaceful protest. His Just Dissent bill was rejected by California Governor Grey Davis this year on the grounds that it would "clog the courts." Instead, Webster argues, Just Dissent would streamline post-protest legal proceedings by setting simple and reasonable maximum penalties for civil disobedience—a \$100 fine, a few days in jail.

"One of the things we were trying to do was encourage police and protesters to work together, to enable civil disobedience in a peaceful, nonviolent way," explains Webster. "Civil disobedience does entail breaking the law to call attention to unjust problems. And we're going to have a lot of this coming up. We actually started before 9/11—but 9/11 made us a little nervous."

It's a pattern that's been coming into focus for a long time, says Warren, September 11th just threw it into sharper relief. Enforcement has intensified in all arenas, she says: besides aggressive application of every trespassing statute in the book—a tactic employed to great effect at the 2000 Republican National Convention in Philadelphia—the feds have recently begun applying RICO laws, originally intended to combat mobsters and drug dealers, to protesters. Meet in a warehouse to discuss an upcoming action and you might call yourself an organizer; the law might call you a conspirator. Depending on the scope of the alleged conspiracy, RICO suits against protesters can demand sometimes millions of dollars. Wrap that up with new domestic terrorism rules, and suddenly everything is a lot costlier—literally and metaphorically.

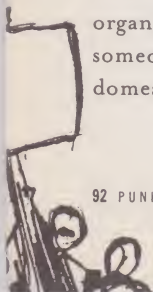
Worse, standards for exactly what constitutes a "domestic terrorist" tend to fluctuate, especially as one moves between federal and state levels. Increasingly, domestic terrorism is where you find it—and with big federal bucks suddenly available for terrorism preparedness, law enforcement is starting to look very, very hard. In Minneapolis in early January, for example, about a quarter of emergency response teams—police, fire and medical—reported some sort of terrorist threat in their jurisdiction.

"I don't think it's bin Laden that's going to parachute in here," said Carver County's emergency management director, "but we certainly do have threats."

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In May, 2001, the FBI had already identified animal-rights groups and anarchists, what they called "special interest extremism", as a prime source of potential domestic terrorism. Anyone on the other end of that press release—the anarchists blamed for "much of the damage" during the WTO protests, or members of the Animal and Earth Liberation Fronts—couldn't have been surprised.

"The war on terrorism did not start on September 12th, 2001," explains a representative of the Che Cafe Collective, an all-ages co-op in San Diego that collided with the UC San Diego



administration over links to designated terrorist organizations posted on its website. "It has been around since the '80s when the Reagan regime was looking for something to replace the cold war paradigm and all of the money that it brought the military industrial complex. Nothing that has happened since September 11th is anything even remotely new."

Instead, the law enforcement tactics which have started to leach into the mainstream protest scene are already painfully familiar to anarchists, animal rights, and environmental activists. And the appearance of a hardened radical fringe movement can be linked in large part to a corresponding increase in law enforcement ferocity. The stakes are higher now; when even conventional civil disobedience comes with a high risk, why limit yourself to conventional civil disobedience?

It's a chilling concept, summed up by Kevin Jonas, a member of Stop Huntingdon Animal Cruelty (SHAC-USA), an animal rights group regarded by many observers as the most extremist group going: "There's a very famous quote by John F Kennedy: 'If you make peaceful revolution impossible, you make violent revolution inevitable.'"

Another activist who jokingly asked to be identified as Pagan Jihad, agrees with Jonas. "It makes people think about picking their battles. You've got one chance in this climate and terrain: if you're gonna do something illegal, if you're going to cross the line and risk felony charges, make sure it's worth it. That's the source of a lot of regret and sadness. How would I think about staring at bars for the rest of my life? And what kind of action would I think was worth it?"

Pagan Jihad—we'll call him PJ—points to recent unfavorable run-ins with the police, notably the incarcerations of Jeff Luers (aka "Free," serving 22 years and 8 months for setting fire to a Chevrolet dealership) and Matt Lamont (aka "Rampage," awaiting trial for transporting a "weapon of mass destruction"—a gas can and assorted paraphernalia—in the trunk of his car). Luers was a fixture in the high-profile Eugene, Oregon activist community; Lamont was a regular at the beleaguered Long Beach, California infoshop that serves as a nexus for community and anarchist organizing. So far, neither has won much popular support or media attention, but they're part of a vanguard of dissenters now facing serious time in prison. And it doesn't take much to get a spot on the inside with them.

"I was sleeping and my sister came in the room, woke me up, and said, 'Uh, Sherman, there's all these FBI-looking people up and down the street, and they're all pointing and looking at this house,'" says Sherman Austin, the webmaster of RaiseTheFist.com who was busted by the federal government early last year. "They pulled me outside, got me on the front lawn, and they had shotguns and submachineguns. I was like, 'Fuck, I guess they take websites seriously.'"



"THERE HAS ALWAYS BEEN A STRICT SEPARATION BETWEEN FOREIGN INTELLIGENCE AND DOMESTIC SURVEILLANCE. AND ALL THOSE WALLS HAVE BEEN PULLED DOWN BY ASHCROFT DURING THE LAST YEAR. WE'RE BACK TO A SITUATION WHERE ALL THOSE ABUSES CAN TAKE PLACE AGAIN—IF THE WRONG PEOPLE ARE OPERATING THE INVESTIGATIONS."

Austin's website is an impressively comprehensive clearinghouse of agit-information. A little too much information, actually: he's now facing what he calls "bogus felony charges" for distribution of information relating to explosives (a recipe someone posted on his website) and possession of a firearm. If convicted, he could spend years in federal prison, pretty much for distributing information already readily available anywhere on the net—a quick Google search for "how to build a pipe bomb" will get you the appropriate text files in seconds.

...

The big question now is what's going to happen if and when America goes to war—and if and when large numbers of Americans decide to protest that war. With tens of thousands attending protests around the country earlier this year, there's a bit of a hold-your-breath feeling when it comes to both activist and law enforcement conduct. So far, actions have been remarkably peaceful. But the country isn't at war yet, either.

"These things are going to be peaceful—for a while," says Lance Webster. "But what's going to happen when Americans start getting killed and the war doesn't end right away? I see a lot of people on the left demonizing the government, demonizing the people they don't like in Congress, and that's scary. I think things are going to get increasingly strident as protesters on the left become frustrated. And if I had a solution, I'd run for public office."

The National Lawyers Guild (NLG) website already advises protesters of the new post-WTO rules of engagement, a telling juxtaposition next to a complaint filed against DC and federal law enforcement officials for unlawful pre-emptive arrest of activists before mass protests during September 2002 (besides what the NLG calls "preventive detention," the complaint also alleges the FBI used the arrests as an opportunity to identify and log members of the protests).

"Overreactions had been rare before the April 2000 protests opposite the joint meetings of the IMF and World Bank," explains an NLG guide for participants in upcoming protests in DC. "However, a disturbing national trend reached DC at that time, with police and prosecutors taking every effort to 'shut down' political speech. While our *expectations* of the police should always be that they will act lawfully, it is important to realize that in this 'after Seattle' period, protesters (and their lawyers) would be wise to be prepared for illegal police actions."

Non-citizens, juveniles or protesters with a less-than-spotless criminal record need to be particularly careful, since an arrest—not to mention possible felony charges—could be disastrous. Without the protection of US citizenship, protesters could be deported: "The Supreme Court has held that the government may target non-citizens *because of* their lawful First Amendment activities," warns the NLG.

Canadian passport holder Faramarz Farahani was held in leg irons for two days after voluntarily presenting himself to an INS office in California in January, without anything at all to do with civil disobedience.

And Patricia Warren details the case of a 17-year-old juvenile arrested at an anti-David Duke rally in California, who was hit with three felony charges and the possibility of being tried as an adult. Without high-powered legal counsel, Warren says, his life would have been destroyed.

...

With the new laws, harsher enforcement, and an environment less accepting of dissent, this spring's anti-war protests will be a litmus test for the movement, activists predict.

"It'll go one of two ways," says Josh, an animal-rights activist. "It'll either be like the death of the anti-war movement in the 1970s after Kent State, or it could be like England during the poll tax riots, when people became very radicalized because they were at the wrong end of the policeman's truncheon."

Activists also predict a schism in the movement this spring: the hardcore will get harder, and the softies will get softer.

"It's a big evolutionary experiment," says PJ. "There's this huge force that just wiped a lot of people off the terrain. And when the stakes get raised that high, a lot of people decide that it's too much. A lot of people back out. And for people standing strong with their convictions who still want to see change, it's definitely decreased their numbers. For now."

But at the same time, the universal effect of a war on Iraq makes protest a much more immediate concern for citizens—and non-citizens—across the board, with the possibility of unprecedented numbers of people suddenly spilling into the streets. And the atmosphere of protest, set by both the government and organizers, may well depend on this new mainstream majority. Civil disobedience legislation has tightened since the 1960s. Continue tightening it, worries Patricia Warren, and something might pop.

"There's already a divide, with activists who are willing to hurt other people and destroy property," she says. "My concern is that peaceful protesters find they get dragged off in handcuffs along with the others, or that police try and make the case they've broken some law."

"For anybody that would choose a more violent way of change without trying peaceful methods first, I think that's pretty sad," she adds. "I would hope that more people would go the peaceful route. I hope more Americans use the democratic process. It's one hope I have: How much in the long run are the American people willing to put up with?"

It's a question that might only take a few weeks to answer, or a few years. Without protecting the right to civil disobedience—with as much emphasis on the "civil" as the "disobedience"—there's no escape for societal pressure. With a widening scope to law enforcement's protest control operations on and off the streets comes a correspondingly intense response. The days of the weekend activist, some say, are fast disappearing. When the police start watching your house and tapping your DSL line because they spotted you hanging out around your local anarcho-crust kids—which is pretty much what members of the Long

Beach infoshop say happens to them—politics stops being a lifestyle and becomes a life.

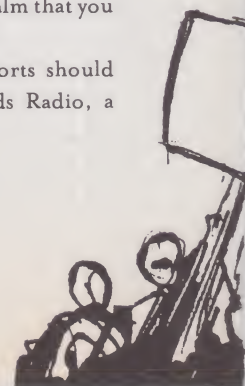
"You've got to take precautions," explains PJ. "Even just living day to day, because they'll be looking for stuff on you. Wearing your politics on your sleeve entombs you in a certain realm that you can't easily escape from."

"Most people that get involved [in activist] efforts should realize this isn't some kind of computer game," adds Radio, a member of the same loose Infoshop collective as PJ.

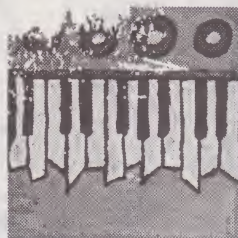
"Yeah," smiles PJ. "Because you can't win." ©



"IT'LL EITHER BE LIKE THE DEATH OF THE ANTI-WAR MOVEMENT IN THE 1970S AFTER KENT STATE, OR IT COULD BE LIKE ENGLAND DURING THE POLL TAX RIOTS, WHEN PEOPLE BECAME VERY RADICALIZED BECAUSE THEY WERE AT THE WRONG END OF THE POLICEMAN'S TRUNCHEON."



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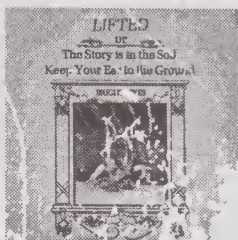
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A BOOTING

Timing's always the thing with this column. I'm writing from mid-November 2002, six weeks before my record

label gets the boot from Mordam Records. My assumption that all readers of this magazine are familiar with Mordam—its wooly integrity, its history—is probably inaccurate. Mordam is, after all, only a distributor, a backstage player. I've long been awed by the availability of bottled Frappucinos in every gas station in America, but I couldn't for the life of me name the corporation that works this magic (perhaps I should find out in the next six weeks). So I will say that Mordam is the 16-year-old music company that, starting with Alternative Tentacles and MRR and \$1000, has risen to eminence as the most revered independent record distributor in the world. I should add that, for reasons of propriety, I'm not supposed to be mentioning my discharge publicly until after the fact. So this column has the chintzy gloom of Yul Brenner's posthumously aired anti-smoking commercials, a bit of kvetching from the past.

This would certainly be the appropriate place to start complaining bitterly over the split. Such complaints would be following in a grand tradition. I can count a half dozen labels, magazines and ex-employees that have felt the need to vent their bottled spleen along these lines. *MRR*'s Tim Yohannon and *Hit List*'s Jeff Bale both took regular potshots at their own distributor. Lefty Hooligan, a hapless, middle-aged communist who ran accounting at Mordam for a great many years, sent several anonymous emails to all the labels after he was fired, urging them to jump ship. Just this last year I received a more somber and signed mass mailing from one of their ex-employees, angered at Mordam's decision to carry a label with links to GG Allin (over the issue of Allin's sexual assault & torture of the employee's cousin—a fair plea, yet a confusing one; like the Sept 11 hijackers, GG has placed himself beyond prosecutorial reach. All we can do now is go after the associates).

But I have nothing bad to say. Mordam gave me a fair deal. I'm proud to have been associated with them. The heave-ho six weeks hence is at least justifiable, if not deserved. When one pays no bills and cleans no catboxes, one eventually gets kicked out of their parent's garage. This is a bedrock principle of America. Only assholes challenge this principle. When my label started with Mordam in 1994, I'd already known half of the staff. I had far fewer friends on hand when the ax fell earlier this fall. And no business is immortal. To a time traveler of the latter 20th century, McDonalds' stock value beating of the past eight quarters would probably be a bit of a shocker. All things are temporary.

Actually, I'm in awe of Mordam's staying power. In the last three years, this company has lost Lookout Records, Kill Rock Stars, Man's Ruin (twice), and the Dead Kennedys and White Stripes catalog, a several million dollar chain of doom that would have creamed a lesser company. Add to that the San Francisco real estate explosion, the budding gravity of digital music and the stresses of interacting with the punk community on a financial level... well, it's mind grinding. The Green Day boom of the year of my arrival left impossible expectations in its wake. The tightening cash flow could be traced through the catering of Mordam's annual conventions: in 1995, a massive gourmet buffet spread at a Japantown bowleri, in '96 a nice meal in a bar's backyard, in '97 a less nice bar in the Mission with stray dog poop under the tables. 2001's convention picnic was held in a public park.

I talked recently with fellow bootnick Bob, owner of Vinyl Communications, and we agreed that there was an element of relief in expulsion. Mordam's monthly catalogs, filled with a merciless tide of mediocre independent music, has long since been a harbinger of mild clinical depression. At conventions, I'd hear about the commercial viability of something called "street punk" that, like the existence of "pogs" ten years earlier, made me feel disoriented and elderly. "Street punk"... is that what those menacing teenagers down on Holt avenue listen to? I don't think I like that one bit—are there any workshops I can sign up for that tell us how to stop this sort of thing? And the element of community is a hard thing to nourish. My first convention was also the first in years without hostility—Tim Yohannon and Jello Biafra

had already decided to avoid each other—and, consequently, the least exciting in years. Karin Gembus left in the late '90s, and with her the most vocal conscience of the Mordam machine. Gembus was once responsible for Bob VC having to fly from San Diego to San Francisco to defend a rather innocuous porn star's techno record. I didn't always agree with her, but the pesky straightforwardness was refreshing (disclosure; Karin once told me, in response to a procedural question concerning a UPC check digit, that she "eschewed" bar codes... forcing me to look the word up in a dictionary, feeling embarrassed but unsure of for whom).

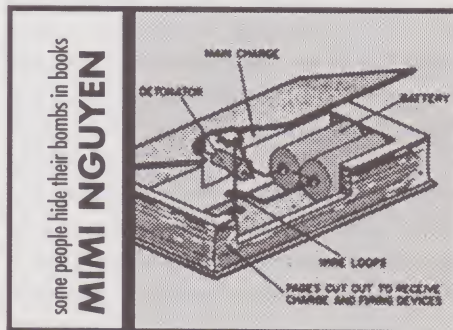
And I am going to miss Ruth. Ruth Schwartz, owner of Mordam, the closest indie music will ever get to a Winston Churchill, was the only person on earth with whom I could plausibly use the sentence "I don't want to get fucked on the shipping". That this heartfelt sentiment—I *don't* want to get fucked on the shipping, not now, not ever—no longer has a proper conversation outlet in my life is... heartrending. I once shared a surreal car ride with Ruth and her husband Rene (the former lead singer of BGK) up front, sitting in back while their precocious grade school daughter and Suzanne, my daily contact, leafed through color proofs from Suzanne's lingerie photo shoot. *Just another wild day at Mordam* was the implied message. *We're unpredictable folks, we lead exciting, rich lives and we're glad to have you on board, McPheeters.*

Ruth is also a connection to a Mordam, to an underground, I was more comfortable with. In *Loud 3D*, The incredible book of 3D photographs of early '80s hardcore bands (Gary Robert, Rob Kulakofsky and Mike Arredondo, IN3D publications.... the patient seeker can find a battered copy on Ebay three or four times a year for \$30) there's a 1984 photo of the MaximumRocknroll crew on page 21. In the picture, a radio studio is crowded with a dozen people, only a few I recognize—Jeff Bale is the most prominent, arms stretched towards the viewer like a stoned grad student. Ruth is in the corner of the frame, wearing a DRI shirt, beaming towards her buddies. Tim Yo is directly behind her, frozen in time with a pair of headphones suspended over Ruth's head. Everyone in the photo is smiling, at ease with each other. That a future Ruth

never once took the public bait for a feud from either Jeff or Tim was admirable. That I actually became friends with two people from this book meant a great deal to me. Ruth and I remain friends now. And she probably wouldn't mind if I called from time to time to tell her how very much I still do not want to get fucked on the shipping. But, frankly: it won't be the same.

The year I started with Mordam I tracked down the equipment used to shoot *Loud 3D*. This was in the final days before the Internet (for me), and many months were spent searching. The camera is a Stereo Realist, manufactured by the David White company of Milwaukee. They stopped making these things 30 years ago, so one is reliant on a small and cranky crowd of 3D enthusiasts for tech support. Far from being a nifty gizmo, I found the camera painful, unergonomic, probably the kind of thing that would draw fatal attention to me in foreign countries. It resembles antiquated optometry equipment and taking a picture felt like shooting a daguerreotype. I had an impossible time finding anyone who would develop the oddly spaced negatives. Digital three dimensional cameras have already arrived in this country. There's no reason for me to keep it.

But I haven't sold it yet. This month, facing an impending Ebay auction of the sacred relic, I find myself seeped in sadness, all that lost potential. As with all things, the time has come to let it go.



During my teenage years, I was stuck between stagnation and danger. It's a cliché about the suburbs—that among the strip malls and cookie-

cutter homes lies a sort of disciplinary violence. It manifests as suppression and surveillance but we call it comfort, or safety. The

metaphors are too easy to come by. My unremarkable house was built on the parking lot for the housing development that became our neighborhood; concrete and asphalt lay beneath 10-inches of soil in our backyard, so everything grew out of the earth stunted and miserly. But I also remember San Diego as a dangerous place—white supremacists beat Mexican workers in the fields, high schools administered dress codes based on race, and on an off-ramp called Mercy Road a police officer raped and killed women alone in their cars. Downtown there were too many sailors fresh from their tours of duty in the Philippines or South Korea or Okinawa. Swaggering with imperial entitlement, they would approach me—a 15-year-old Vietnamese me in my short plaid punk rock skirt and black tank tops—as if they owned me, as if we were in Saigon during the war. I was afraid of their potential for violence, every time I said, "Fuck you!"

My friends were a grab bag of geeks and punks, and even these were the uncool punks—too desperate, too high, too pregnant, too much trouble. For me, there was never a working fusion between the intellectualism and the danger. I penned editorials against the Gulf War in the newspaper office and discussed Bertrand Russell in the classroom; I stole bottles of wine from model homes and broke into empty houses to watch others drink from the bounty. I got straight A's (except for that C in Advanced Placement physics), never drank or smoked, and changed every morning in the school bathroom into torn tights and black eyeliner. My best friend made an escape from the danger when she met her boyfriend in Moot Court, bored with the drama of petty theft and underage drinking. It never occurred to me to leave.

I thought the choices laid before me were as black and white—I could go the way of pretend exercises in careerism and proper romance or sometimes idle, sometimes deliberate destruction. I was a smart but stupid kid, but at least I know I wasn't alone in this. A sweet, shy boy I met as a Morrissey fan became an overnight Marxist radical. The green cardigan sweaters and modest pompadour went the way of work boots and plaid flannel shirts. Was it a heart-felt commitment to the proletariat? I suppose, in the same way I felt sure about moving to New York, the East Village, to be an artist and activist. Dimitri and I went to protest rallies and talked politics in the school library in hushed whispers, arguing in a friendly manner about socialism, anarchism, and the revolution.

Later I heard that he joined the Revolutionary Communist Party, one of a dozen sectarian groups and sold papers around town at rallies. I prefer not to think of him this way; it seems desperate and sad, speaking to some scar I had never been allowed access to in high school. Did he find friends there, desperate and misguided, grown isolated and paranoid? When I became an activist I'd had my share of unpleasant experiences with this type—dogmatic, awkward, bitter. Did he become one of them, barking at the opposition and crafting slogans for the vanguard? Did it help him? Did it make him worse?

And I remember running into Dimitri after school with another friend during my senior year—he was drunk, yelling incoherent slo-

gans and waving a flask. Slurring, he kept trying to hold Cathy's hand.

Over the years, after I left town swearing to make good on something as long as it was elsewhere, the rumors would trickle back to me. Melissa became a teenaged mother who smacked her baby and took her along to purchase meth from her dealer, and then disappeared. Peter is an archeologist and a married man. Patric moved to Long Island, then Kansas, where he lives with his wife and children and works for the phone company. Brian was born again. Austin is a physicist. There were no real surprises, and I wonder what that means.

This summer I skipped my high school reunion, 10 years gone by. I was going to go. I planned on carpooling with Amy, a former classmate who now works with Asian immigrant families at a non-profit in Sacramento. We've chatted about the direction of our lives over coffee, once or twice. A small group of girl geeks, we made the decision to crash the hotel after the catered dinner. Now married to the boy she met in Moot Court, Holly and I imagined ourselves reoccupying our former roles as the sarcastic girls in the corner, talking trash and rolling eyes.

But after a grueling first week of teaching summer session, I cancelled. Instead I stayed at home curled up with Wendy Brown's *Politics After History*. Holly called me from a stairwell in the hotel, slightly drunk. She asserted, grumpily, that had I been there, at least she would have seen some fights. *Something*, she said, to redeem the night.

Am I not so different now? I don't know if I ever thought this far ahead in high school—I stopped keeping a journal in 11th grade and I haven't been able to since, not with any consistency. Would it have helped me make sense? My battered notebooks are full of truncated notes, odd impressions and flashes of danger: "Detroit Marriott mall-like food court—*Drinking Sweat in An Ash Age*. Atlanta airport—white rocking chairs along the concourse. Kansas—there is a NAZI on the plane with 'SS' belt buckle, rings, tats. Oh fuck."

Does a journal become dangerous if you find yourself reviewing your life for narrative structure, resolution, or consistent character development? I used to spend caffeinated nights with the boys, playing punk rock and pranks into the late hours of the morning. Later I walked along the Hudson River piers, arm in arm with a girl long gone, past meatpacking plants and drowsy prostitutes trailing johns behind them like kites. These days are a whirlwind of airports and layovers, restless naps snatched in uncomfortable chairs (vinyl and upholstered) and far too many details (a rainbow of neon tubes above a moving sidewalk, the empty chatter and clichéd speech of businessmen, a swell of academics glad-handing around the room). Two summers ago I saw my first subterranean show in a dank basement (different than house shows, which I have been to in abundance) in Bloomington, Indiana. But of course it was a band from the Mission, their van with California plates parked on the gravel driveway, the pungent stink of unwashed punks smelling of a once-familiar sense of home.

In the end I think I didn't go to the reunion because it seemed like an arbitrary anniversary, because it seemed like resolution—how

does so-and-so get from point A to B? I would have been disappointed. Could I really plot the points along this linear trajectory to illustrate how I got here from there? How do you tell someone the story of your life in five awkward minutes, when it makes no sense still?

The second issue of the Race Riot compilation zine is available from Pander Zine Distro: <http://www.panderzinedistro.com>. It's thick and smart and important, and even includes a directory of zines by kids of color (past and present).

Get in touch if you like. Mimi Nguyen / POB 11906 / Berkeley, CA 94712-2906 / slander13@mindspring.com.



*My friends from the
prison they ask unto me /
How good, how good
does it feel to be free? /
And I answer them
most mysteriously /
Are birds free from the
chains of the skyway?*

This guy was talking about the time he needed specialized medical treatment that was only available at a hospital on Staten Island.

A look of horror crossed his face. "I mean, I'm a New Yorker. I've lived all my life in Manhattan. Staten Island is some place... out there. It's nowhere I would ever have the faintest desire to go."

He went anyway, and it saved his life. But he's never been back to Staten Island again, and, if he can help it, never will.

I couldn't help laughing. I'm not a New Yorker, but I've spent enough time there to be familiar with the fierce provincialism that pervades the five boroughs. There are Manhattanites who pride themselves on never setting foot in Brooklyn or Queens, or for that matter, never going north of 14th Street or south of 42nd.

Staten Island is New York's forgotten borough. Many claim it more properly belongs to New Jersey. The only way to get there from Manhattan is via boat or a long car journey through Brooklyn to the Verazzano Narrows Bridge.

Once there, it's easy to forget you're in New York City at all. It's much less densely populated, people tend to live in single-family houses instead of apartments, there are tree-lined streets, houses with back and front yards, children's toys and lawn care tools scattered about, all the accoutrements, in fact, of suburban America.

Everything, in fact, that I was trying to get away from when I first came to New York in 1968. Well, I was also trying to get away from the police and the FBI, but that's another story. I was broke, scared, desperate, and in my muddled mind, just hiding out until the revolution came, which would probably be by that summer at the latest.

It was during that time that Staten Island took on a different meaning for me. The place I was living, a squat on E 2nd Street,

offered few of the comforts of home. The junkies had broken the lock off the front door, but that didn't matter, because there was nothing to steal. If we'd bothered fixing the lock, they would have broken the door down because they'd assume we were hiding something in there.

There was a fire station across the street, and the sirens went off every 10 minutes or so. That was bad enough, but it was made worse by this story we'd heard from this paranoid freak who called himself Speedy Gonzales.

According to Speedy, the Devil collected the souls of the dying with a giant pair of tweezers as they left their bodies. He then deposited those destined for hell into a jar, where they would spend eternity screaming in nonstop agony. "And every time they need a police or fire siren on earth" he said, "the Devil just cracks the lid on that jar."

I would lie awake in the middle of the night, sprawled out on the mats that covered the entire floor in the black room. It was called the black room because, on the theory that our minds were imprisoned by artificial distinctions between floors, walls, and ceilings, we'd painted them all black so you couldn't tell where one began and the other left off.

Sharyn thought it would help us sleep better, too. "It will be like camping out in the middle of a dark forest," she enthused. Of course dark forests didn't have the gibbering, mumbling and snoring of Leon, who'd been otherwise catatonic since taking an overdose of reds a few months earlier. Any remaining pretense to dark solitude had been shattered when, in an LSD-fueled burst of "creativity," we'd splattered Day-Glo paint over everything, mats, bedding, clothing and ourselves included.

It was at times like that, when dawn seemed a million years away and Speedy's story of the damned souls seemed not just plausible, but probable, that, with my eyes wide open, I'd dream of Staten Island.

It's not that I wanted to live there. As a modern, disaffected youth, I rejected everything about its wholesome American-ness. As a political and cultural revolutionary, I had no doubt that my proper place was in this godforsaken slum, an abandoned corner of the city that most people refused to live in, even for free.

New York may beckon to the world as the most glamorous and glitzy place in history, but on E 2nd Street, the most glittering sight I was likely to see was the sparkle and flash of broken glass scattered amid the dogshit. It was a carpet of diamonds, I told myself, as I played a game where I'd try to walk barefoot to the corner and back, trusting only to my higher power or the Great Cosmic Poobah to guide my feet on a safe path. It rarely worked.

So sometimes after another sleepless, siren-haunted night, I'd walk down to the bottom of Manhattan, hop the turnstile to the Staten Island Ferry (it cost a nickel in those days, five cents more than I typically had), and escape from it all.

Today the Ferry is even a better bargain—it's free—and I heartily recommend it to anyone, visitor or native New Yorker. But in those days, for me, it was priceless.

I'd ride past the Statue of Liberty, watch the New York skyline shrinking on the horizon, and land in another world. Once off the

boat in Staten Island, I'd walk like a man possessed. I didn't know what it was, but I was looking for something, something I sensed was out there. Eventually I found it.

It was a field, actually. A few blocks wide, overgrown with weeds and strewn with trash. There was nothing at all remarkable about it. It was just a bit of open space, somewhere where there was nobody else around and I could see the sky.

When I told somebody about it, they asked, "Why didn't you just go to Central Park?" But this was different. Central Park was carefully manicured, and full of people. Everything there had a purpose and a place. If anything, it was more organized and structured than the rest of Manhattan. My field in Staten Island had no point. It was just a big vacant lot, the kind of place where I'd played as a kid, a blank slate on which I could write my own world.

I even found something I didn't think existed in New York City: a dirt road. Alaska Street, it was called. I couldn't imagine how, of all the streets in New York City, one had managed to remain unpaved. Had somebody forgotten? Had the neighbors taken up a petition demanding their street be left untouched by progress?

Walking down that road, the stones digging into the paper-thin soles of my disintegrating sneakers, I was a child again. I was whiling away the afternoon on one of the country roads near my relatives' farms in Southern Ontario; I was dreaming dreams bound only by the sky that seemed to go on forever.

Sooner or later I'd get bored or cold or hungry and have to board the boat back to Manhattan, to slip back into my more recent persona of urban scavenger, love child and street-fighting revolutionary. It was a persona I wore uneasily, one that didn't seem to fit me. But I couldn't admit that to anyone, least of all myself.

You know how adults love to tell young people, "These are the best years of your life, make the most of them"? Well, no one was telling me anything like that. Maybe because I made a point of never talking to adults. I was 20, but a very young 20. I looked and acted about 15, which was how old Sharyn was.

She was actually the most together of our little group. She brought in nearly all the money, from turning tricks for wealthy businessmen uptown. Unfortunately, she picked up something else uptown: a heroin habit. The first couple times she OD'd, they got her to the hospital in time, but I knew that one of these times they wouldn't.

Something seemed to go out of Sharyn in the weeks that followed. There was no sparkle in her eyes, no more of the childlike imagination and fantasies that would send us clambering over rooftops or wandering through darkened streets like medieval pilgrims on a quest for some unholy grail. She rarely felt well enough to work, so money grew tight, and we had to send poor, dumb Leon back to his mother in Yonkers.

When I'd found out Sharyn was a prostitute, I'd been indignant. But as with most things, no matter how awful, I'd gotten used to it. Like a typical male, I'd thought that I should be looking after her rather than the other way around, that it would make more sense for her to be my girlfriend and for me to bring in the money.

But this was not, as they say, reality-based. It had been years since I'd held on to a job for more than a couple of weeks, and, looking the way I did now, it was unlikely anyone would hire me. I stole now and then, but I'd lost my confidence after a couple close calls, and I was too chicken-shit to beg. About all I was good for was taking drugs—mostly LSD—and imagining myself as a hero.

So I was a hero, a brave knight errant, and she, well, I referred to her as *The Good Witch Of The Lower East Side*. In my dreams. In reality, she was a junkie and a whore, and I was living off her. Never mind, it was just a temporary situation. Soon the revolution would come and the world would be set right again.

But as summer crept in, the revolution showed no sign of arriving and life continued to get harder. Sometimes we'd go a couple days without eating. At any point we could get evicted from our building, Sharyn could OD again, I might get arrested and sent to prison. I was scared, nearly every minute of the day and even more so at night, but there was no one I could tell about it. Eventually I did the only thing I'd ever known how to do: I ran.

All the way to California, in fact, and that was far enough and different enough from everything I'd ever known that for a while I could pretend my life was all right. Beautiful, even, as the hippies were fond of saying. I wrote one letter to Sharyn, full of the pretentious lyrical bafflelegab we spoke in, telling her how I was living in an enchanted forest beside the western sea. She never answered. I can't say I blame her.

It's only now that it's begun to sink in just how awful my life was, how awful I was. I say that not so much out of self-loathing or a desire to wallow in past miseries, but out of sense of wonder. How, I ask myself, could I have lived like that and never questioned it, never doubted the notion that I was in the midst of a great adventure that the squalor in which I dwelt was part of a political and social revolution that would transform the world?

I would lecture anyone who would listen about how we young people were part of a new way of life based on peace and love and sharing. Somehow I failed to notice that that way of life was funded entirely by prostitution, drugs, stealing and scrounging through other people's rubbish. I was going to build a new world? I couldn't even organize my own life.

What's truly bewildering is that for all the hardships I put up with in those days, I did very little complaining. Today, despite having a nice, warm house, plenty of food, enough money to live well, and no longer being in trouble with the police, I complain more than I ever did back then.

Maybe it's because I have more free time for finding faults. Or maybe it's because in our impassioned youth we develop blind spots that enable us to endure what should be unendurable, even to make it into something admirable and adventurous.

Young people are constantly telling me how they envy me for the "exciting" and "colorful" life I've lived. And it's true that my past has provided me with a nearly endless supply of cocktail party anecdotes, which might come in handy if I ever actually get invited to a cocktail party.

I've swung between two extremes. Earlier in life I was the proverbial legend in my own mind, constantly burnishing and embellishing my experiences and offering them up as proof that, yes, I had truly "lived." Later on, I became appalled that I'd squandered so much of my life on truly ridiculous and pathetic enterprises, that I'd allowed a combination of selfishness and fear to prevent me from ever truly engaging with life, or, most importantly, with my fellow human beings.

Perhaps I'm finally finding a middle ground. It does seem as though I took the most convoluted, circuitous route possible to get to where I am, and that if I'd used a shred of common sense (or bothered listening to anyone or anything beside my own rampant ego), I'd have figured out most of what I know now before I was through my 20s.

But I'm a great believer in the Chinese concept of *dao*, "the way." According to this principle, everything has its own *dao*, its own unalterable way of being. It's like water. Its *dao* is to find its way to the sea, and whether it sweeps down quickly in a mountain torrent or spends a few millennia chiseling its way through solid rock to form the Grand Canyon, it will inevitably get there in the end.

Looking back upon my life, I seem to have chosen the Grand Canyon route, though I don't mean to imply that my life has become a national monument. It's more like a big hole in the ground, but then I still haven't got to the sea, have I?



Last night, Panty Raid played our first show since tour. We showed up two hours early and I tried to remain sober in order to play drums in the

professional manner that is expected of me. Talk about a lost cause. Three hours at Mission Records with NO booze?!? That's like telling someone in a burning building to disregard the emergency exits. Forty-ounces later, it was starting to feel like a party again when an attractive young man came out of nowhere and brazenly grabbed Seth's "stuff". Front AND back. Right there, in front of God, Tim Yo's ghost, and everyone else to see. As if that wasn't scandalous enough, then the boy came into the Mission Records V.I.P. lounge (which doubles as a nasty-ass kitchen and storage space) and commenced making-out with three out of four members of Panty Raid. It was a truly filthy spectacle. Young Alfonso, so hot, but so wrong. Like getting a boner at a Harry Potter movie. I didn't have to worry about the ethical ramifications for long, however, as Brontez ruined our special moment by calling our new friend a groupie. Alfonso got offended and cut our party short, even though I tried to reassure him. "No, no, you're not a groupie. More like a roadie. A roadie who doesn't carry anything, tune gui-

tars, or drive. A special roadie". He left anyway. Later on, I sat in the back room with my old pal, Scott, doing shots of tequila and reminiscing. He pretended like he didn't know I was 14-and-a-half the first time we made out, even though I once saw my ninth grade school picture in his photo album. At least Alfonso was over 18. Still, how sweet it is to have met in such a tawdry way and to be sitting together as friends drinking in a big pile of filth 12-years later.

In August, Panty Raid went on another mini-tour with Le Tigre. This time, it was the rust belt: Chicago, Milwaukee, Cleveland, Pittsburgh, and Detroit. Since we were only playing five shows, we decided to make things as ridiculous as possible. Four band members, plus three buck-wild roadie/dancers came together like mighty Voltron to form Team Gay.

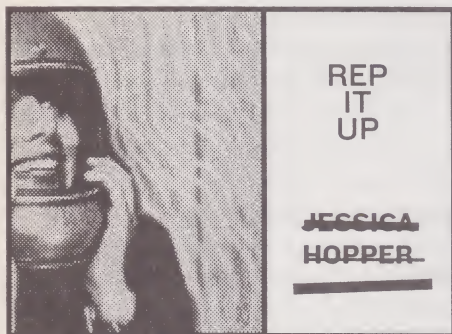
Le Tigre is one of my favorite new bands. I knew Johanna and Kathleen from back in the day, but hadn't talked to either of them in years and years. Still, they invited my band, which they had never even heard, to come play shows with them. This act of solidarity brought a tear to my eye and a tickle to my bum. I love those techno bitches! I was stoked we were going to get to see them five nights in a row.

Unfortunately, though our hearts were in a similar place, our touring agendas were different. They were at work and had to pace themselves. We had five days to fit in as much mayhem as possible. They play big, fancy-pants clubs all the time. We usually play places like Boogie's bedroom in San Pedro or a barn in North Carolina. In their suitcases, one might find a bottle of vitamin water and a Sade tape. In our suitcases, you'd probably come across some Vaseline and a half-eaten bag of Fritos.

At our first show at The Metro in Chicago, we were like Le Tigre's trailer park cousin who wears a skirt with no panties at a dance recital. The boys ran around in pink Daisy Dukes and tighty-whites. Naomi had on a pukey Rod Stewart wig and a nurse uniform. Our room backstage was Beyond Thunderdome. Unattended boom box blaring Michael Jackson hits, beer soaked clothes and food and wet toilet paper strewn everywhere. Our dance party and dry hump marathon spilled into the hallway as it became too rowdy to be contained in our trashed little dressing room. We were having a great time, however Le Tigre were not so delighted. It was said they talked of having made a mistake when they brought us on tour. Luckily, this news was not relayed to us until later, otherwise, there would've been seven tear-soaked pillows that night.

Much like a movie you have to watch three times to catch the best jokes (see *Friday* and *Rushmore* for reference), Le Teegz warmed up to us. A mutual spark of affection that grew until, when it came time for us to drive home, it felt like the last day of summer camp. Sentimental and full of hi-jinx. Seth finally retaliated for Naomi pouring soda into his butt crack. Brontez made out with some boys backstage. Le Tigre surprised us by calling us onstage to present us with props and gifts. Really good gifts, too, like the Dolly Parton autobiography-on-tape. I was genuinely touched. We capped off the night with a sidewalk dance party and a human pyramid with everyone from our two vans. Then it was time for everyone to go our separate ways.

On the 40-hour drive back to California, Dolly Parton's six tape autobiography was a lifesaver. As Dolly told us about her Smoky Mountain childhood in her inimitable honey sweet voice, my mind drifted back to Panty Raid's humble beginnings. The time we all went to jail in the South, all the people we kissed for love or gas money, Ian and Seth flying cross-country to play a show in a freezing-ass barn, hitch hiking from In-N-Out Burger, sex in someone's mom's backyard, and all of our many other drunken misadventures. I can't wait to tell our rags-to-rags-to-even-more-rags story. *Breaking Down and Drinking Up*, the official Panty Raid expose, coming soon to a street corner near you.



Teenagers are Genius: a memoir

After 45-minutes and two bus transfers and a 20-minute walk, we were most of the way there, though we only knew where "there" was from a

crude map, purloined from Sean while we smoked in the parking lot between classes earlier that day. Sean's band was supposedly playing at a party in a basement ensconced deep in the limp, colonial recesses of Edina, for the birthday of a sophomore girl we barely knew who did not go to our school, named Kathy McGinty. Kathy's claim to fame was that her brother dealt acid at Breck, the tawniest of the trifecta of local private high schools. There had been promises of kegs, and aside from wandering around in the filthy snow in Minneapolis-proper our night held little else. Alas, we soldiered on, through suburban wilderness, milking whatever opportunity availed, content in the reverie of the fact that we did not have, at that moment, any fucking idea where we were.

Anything that was a breach of a subambulant weekend night in the ever-continuing stream of the low-altitude 11th grade social life that we were currently cultivating in our teen-punk cabal was of value in and of itself. Morbidly dull stunts; (i.e.; hanging out by the train tracks, throwing rocks at trains, walking from one end of Minneapolis to the other, trying to find the place in the woods where Satanists kill things, throwing bottles from overpasses, climbing trees, antagonizing strangers, tagging walls with made up band names and/or political slogans, stealing large objects of no value)—were peppered with clumsy attempts to procure whatever cheap intoxicants we could manage (barring glue and needle drugs) so as to pierce our aching, yet utterly staid attempts at subversive behavior with a bit of stumbling or vegetative affectations, courtesy of some (fetid) Minnetonka ditch weed dried in an someone's oven.

Miles and JR walked behind me, engaging in the vague arguing and one-upmanship that they are prone to, the brand of insightful quarrels emblematic of collector geeks and people who spend their lives trying to change the world from behind the

counter of a record store. Miles had been swigging a lethal-strength homemade concoction of vegan White Russians, (equal parts soy milk, rum and vodka from his parents' cabinet) out of a 16 oz. Schweppes bottle. Over the last half-hour, his lucid patter had now ebbed into straight running of his mouth.

Between the two of them, they had covered sundry theories related to the death of Metallica bassist Cliff Burton, factoids relating to the Egg Hunt single, and through a tangential scree on favorite rock or jazz drummers that died via OD, Miles was five-odd minutes into spilling some complex polemic regarding Zeppelin's "Bonzo's Montreaux", a digression which had now gone into extra innings due to JR's constant interjection. Miles paused, feigning graciousness, allowing JR's coquettish attempt to shut him down; "Dude, don't fuck with me, the crate in my head... it's deep. It's deep." Miles rolled his eyes and continued.

Tromping through the wilted grass packed with shit-grey slush/ice, our minds drifting to imagined low-grade hedonism, and the free keg bounty which could suffice; post-graduation fantasies were all we could tangibly indulge—hitting drinking age, being able to get legally tattooed, vote or sign a lease—these things we perceived as beacons of a brave new era trumped up with legitimacy and tremulous undoing, the promise in being old enough to waste your time and fuck up your life in the precise manner of your choosing—casual deathwish as ultimate freedom. We *knew* that whatever led up until then was simply fulfilling some vast parental/ governmental/ social path engineered with our specific soul-killing in mind, all the while with our GPA's blinking in hot white fluorescent on a blimp overhead. Or at least that was our party line.

Yet, even the hottest shit parents-outta-town parties, the most salacious education in dry-humping-on-the-couch-before-your-parents-get-home, all the chest roasting shots of cheap liquor—all that was just stunted warm ups for the qualified off-the-hinges grown-up sleaze, a life currently held back by midnight curfews and latent adolescent fear of *the real thing*. Like a pre-Tim Replacements song, without the gauzy Westerbugian romance and indulgence. Turning 18 loomed like a fucking jailbreak.

We rang the illuminated doorbell of the Edina party-house, and waited silently, as an elaborate 12-tone chime heralded our arrival. JR applied Chapstick, Miles stubbed out his cigarette. A girl opened the door and looked at us blankly. She possessed the attendant blonde sweetness of a popular girl, with an air of *noblesse oblige*, her mouth a warzone of braces. She told us to come in, and promptly walked away, back to the living room, leaving us to shut the door. We headed straight for the kitchen, Miles and JR looking for the keg. There was none. The boys grabbed two cans each of room temperature Bud from a six-pack on the counter, and we headed for the back porch, anxious to escape the sideways glances we had earned upon our sudden appearance in house populated by people we did not know, whose sole peerage with us was in the purgatorial cosmos of neurotic self-embarrassment we had on endless reserve. JR, Miles and I ambled outside in hopes no one would try to fight us, or kick us out, or ask what we were doing there.

The house was perched atop an undramatic ravine, with the back deck overlooking a wooded acreage of nature made dead by the winter, and illuminated only by porch-mounted motion lights. We sat on

the with our legs dangling over the ledge of the deck. The boys drank their beers. I don't remember what we talked about other than what we always talked about; how much we hated things—bands, people, our so-called friends, this town, etc. We peered back occasionally, through the sliding glass doors, at the people inside that we barely knew, who fit casually into the categories of *things we hated*, the people sitting on the plastic covered furniture, who, from our moated vantage point, seemed to be having a terrific time and enjoying each others company. Their strainless lives, as they bucked and heaved before us, seemed tailor-made to sap resentment from the very marrow of our adolescent cores. And we supped on the savory hate that accrued; as a mode of identifying ourselves, finding ourselves in pointing out *what we are not*, which was easier than claiming *what we were*. Which was: funna-be prole kids from the city with a lot of records and a lot of angst, or to borrow from the Minutemen, we were *corndogs*.

There we sat, waiting for the door to good-times to fling open, not knowing that 10 years down the line, this sort of night, summoned up from the files of *romanticized nights of our bygone youth*, would seem special enough to remember, to harken recollection of in front of strangers, to retell and recount with fondness, drunk or sober, of our corndog travails, back before now, when we were not yet weighted down with the adult woe of a fated doom.

JR recently wrote, in a review of Andrew WK's record, "Teenagers are geniuses. I think the teenage me, the infantile and deeply stupid suburban milk baby who resented the entire world and just wanted a pair of Air Revolutions because they were expensive was the best me to ever grace this rotating shit orb of a world." Teenage life is little but the pursuit of slightly less disappointment than usual. Adult life is often about the same, but now the bills are in your name. What the teenage-me and what the post-teenage me wants has evolved surprisingly little, aside from how I feel about parties. From age 14, until, perhaps, last year, all I ever wanted from parties was to avoid them, or leave as soon as I got there. I was "too busy", a people hater, stewing in my notorious lack of social grace, plus I didn't drink and being at parties where you were the only one who would recount events as "idiotic" which everyone else—greased on 40s and shots—remembered as a good time, is not really much of a time at all. But something shifted. I had a persistent notion of wanting to reclaim some base teenager experience that I had never laid claim to in the first place and had seemingly bridged entirely in order to get in a few years of 60-hour work weeks. Suddenly I wanted to go out. What I wanted from parties aligned with what everyone wanted from parties, to engage the idea that after a week of listless routine, for a night, you could cleave yourself from your life, as it, stands and suspend the fantasy that "anything might happen."

And nothing much happened. Our friends never showed up. The looks we got upon our exit confirmed our suspicions that it was in fact 'the wrong party', though every party of my entire high school career seemed to be *the wrong party*. Miles stole a bottle of Tylenol, a *People* magazine from the bathroom and as much beer as could fit in his coat pockets on our way out. We got a little lost amidst the endless horizon of cul-de-sac'd streets, red brick ranch houses, porches with fluted columns draped in haggard tinsel, epic driveways filled with an assortment of late model family cars flecked filthy white from a half-season of contending with the salted-snow, two mailboxes—one for the mail

and one for the paper; the lack of sidewalks forcing us into the street, where there was no traffic to speak of at 11pm on a Friday night.

Soundtrack to this column: Numbers remix LP, The Replacements Stink, Bounty Killer, Trina No Panties 12", Zeppelin box set, Sonic Youth Sister. Thanks to JR and Al for editorial help. Write me: po box 14624 chicago il 60614 / mcfrench-vanilla@yahoo.com

The new issue of Hit it or Quit it Magazines™, #17, with El-P on the cover is available at insound.com. Word life.



Let's celebrate our sorry lives / quick little buzz could kill some time / functioning's rough with shit on my mind / gotta be blind for just a little while

Author of the above is Scott Hicks, friend of mine from the punk days, a couple of years younger than me and expecting his second child, cleanly shaven head, happily married. Homeowner, landlord (he owns a second house which he rents to a college sporting fraternity of some sort—"they're nice guys, when they don't party too much," he says); also the overlord of some sort of domain on the Internet, which provides him less of an income than domain-overlordship did in medieval times, but enough to get by, apparently.

Sitting in Scott's living room, in Greensboro, North Carolina, on a visit home, going down the list of people we know in common from the mutual past, checking them off one by one, where they are and what they're doing. We're two graphable blips within an aggregate; not the opposing poles of existence by any means but not living anything like the same life either. Our world-views are still pretty similar, both to each others' and to our younger selves: we'd probably both still describe ourselves as punk. His wife, Gina, plays with the kid, Max, on the floor, half-listening to him and to us, smiling to herself. Everything in Scott's life strikes me as very *functional*: Gina and Scott are, in fact, one of two functional couples I know of currently in existence in the world. Four people out of eight billion involved in functional relating is not too bad, I guess, statistically—it confirms my general intuitive sense of the matter, which is that relational functionality is an attainable state, though statistically very improbable.

I will always think of Scott in terms of his Thanksgiving story, told to me in the parking lot of Revco in Durham, NC, when he was about 17-years-old. Sitting on the curb in the full-bloomed sketchiness of his youth, he had recounted the events of the family festivities that had transpired a few days prior. His grandfather, he said, had made a toast, addressing the individual men of the Hicks clan, and, arriving at Scott, had noted that he was the last in the line, "the last of the seed-bearing Hickses." Scott had repeated the phrase to me and laughed, grinning with a strange mixture of chagrin and pride as he described the ensuing uncomfortable silence

in the room, all eyes turned towards him, brows furrowed in contemplation of the terminus point of the Hicks family lineage.

But here we are, now, in the living room of his house—Scott Hicks, upstanding member of the community, responsible citizen, conscientious father. The Hicks line has successfully forged on, and without the sharp turn towards cannibalism and satanic idolatry which the family had darkly envisioned those many Thanksgivings ago.

Thinking about Scott, and where he is in his life now, I have to wonder: Am I letting team Burian down? I try to keep the family up on my recent doings, I send home my press-clippings and appearances in the police blotter, but is this enough? Am I adequately providing the antecedent generations with the only real thing they ask of you, the sigh of relief that comes with not turning out how you threatened to?

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Woke up, I had the same clothes on I had on last night / Damn, I must have passed out / And cash is just like the clothes worn yesterday / We all broke / I gotta get my ass out / 'cause I refuse to be a bum / especially comin' where I'm from / I'm a provider, girl

Narrator of above is the protagonist of a song by the rap group NERD; this is a song which I find myself musing on often, trying to deconstruct its themes and inflections, trying to understand its message, compare and contrast, and in that way somehow better understand my own position in the universe. Here is a song propelled by what heavily bearded German philosophers of previous centuries referred to as a dialectic, meaning a clash of fundamentally oppositional forces, whose clash, rather than being entirely destructive, becomes the engine which propels the actors forward. The central tension of the song is the incongruity of its format, the romantic slow jam, versus its content, which is the narrator's defense of his drug dealing. "I'm a provider, girl," he explains, his voice rising in pitch as he intones the phrase. He means to present his position as noble, romantic and honorable, and in the same way that the lyrical content subverts the junior-high schmalziness of the musical backdrop, the narrator's reversal of conventional morality subverts our cultures' constructed notions of correct, responsible behavior. The irony that someone would engage in that most rhetorically anti-family of activities—drug dealing!—precisely out of a commitment to supporting his own family, the anti-social action as an expression of adult social responsibility, comments interestingly both on the hypocrisy of middle-class "American dream" expectations, the impossibility of their fulfillment for the underclass within the current capitalist framework, and also the extent to which the core patriarchal values of our culture, commitment to the nuclear family and a success-model based on earning ability and "providership," are embedded in even marginal sub-cultures which, on their surface, seem anti those values and expectations.

And of course, the further irony is the commentary on myself vs. Scott, he in his own way attempting to synthesize the dialectically oppositional strands of sub-cultural affiliation with the material reality of middle-class existence, fatherhood, fiscal responsibility, coming to some sort of synthesis, more or less, of "punk parenting," an idea which seems on the surface as incongruous a notion as the NERD singer's sugar-sweet coo that if he doesn't end up having to blast a state trooper with his shotgun he can't wait to get home and

hold your hand, girl. And then myself, dancing about in a room in Chicago, IL, where the walls are almost completely covered with garbage I have found and tacked up, the décor of a deranged 12-year-old with obsessive compulsive mania, listening to the song and just laughing and laughing, because there is no way, really, that I can relate the sentiments of this song to myself, I might as well have phonetically memorized the Martian national anthem. I am in no way a provider, I am only marginally even capable of taking care of myself. The protagonist of the song is a graphable blip on a continuum with Scott Hicks, and it is a graph on which I do not register at all, on which I am statistically superfluous information.

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Walking to the grocery store down a side street, I find myself behind a pack of kids, probably 12 or 13-year-olds, all boys, sauntering down the street, dressed almost identically in baggy sweatpants, puffy hooded jackets, ski caps, the color scheme a uniform muted gray. I wonder if they met up on a corner somewhere earlier all dressed alike, spontaneously, somehow tapped into the 13-year-old fashion mass mind, or whether these little tough guys were on the phone with one another this morning, like adolescent girls, deciding on today's outfits: "Yo, man, tell Terry he can't wear the puffy jacket with the red piping anymore. That's a fashion *faux pas*, mutha fucka!" The gang of junior high hooligans struts along, passing as they do a solitary, similarly attired 13-year-old, albeit dressed in a monochrome of a more blueish hue. He cowers slightly, eyes fixed straight ahead, while they murmur icy and implicitly threatening what's ups at him. As he passes me, our eyes meet. I am impressed by his mustache. Pretty good for his age; he looks, really, like a tiny adult, like a bonsai'd gangster. He sees me, eyes still locked in the cold poker face of fear, and then, registering me, smiles broadly, almost seems about to burst out laughing. Perhaps, I think, it's the relief of seeing a mature, adult presence, and knowing that no harm can befall him according to the laws of the junior high schoolyard? But, moments later, I notice one of the gray-uniformed hoodlums turn around, spot me, make that "pffffh—" noise one commonly associates with the act of reflexively spitting out a beverage. He elbows his compatriots, who all turn and check me. Their eyes light up; very soon they are openly laughing and shouting mocking epithets at me. Seeing as they consider the exact uniform they are wearing but in a slightly different chromatic shade an affront to taste and decency, it makes sense, of course, that they find my outfit incalculable on their internal fashion richter scales, a disaster of such monumental and devastating magnitude that, like an earthquake which has not only killed your loved ones and destroyed your belongings, but has actually swallowed your entire country and obliterated all traces of anything that gives your life even abstract, symbolic meaning, there is nothing to do in the face of it but get hysterical, laugh your ass off.

I walk behind the kids, trying to catch the gist of their twittered, exuberant denunciations of my wardrobe. Finally, one of the boys, as if elected spokesman, turns around, and summates their critique in one word, yelled over his shoulder at me in the form of schoolyard taunt. "Seventies!" he yells.

The kids slow down so that I am forced to pass them. This way they don't have to strain their necks during their inventory of my

dress offenses. They follow me down the street, laughing and yelling insults for me as if I'm an inanimate object, a trailer for a movie or a poster on a wall. This is the sort of thing that happened to me when I was 13 all the time, I recall. Being taunted by seventh graders no longer bothers me, at 31. I congratulate myself on that victory. I actually savor the taunting, and I slow down so I can catch their specifics. They are discussing my pants.

"Nigger's wearing bell-bottoms!" gloats one.

That's startling. I've never been called a nigger before. I'd never expected to, honestly, being obviously caucasian and all. But there it is, mid-November 2002, and the word seems to have reached such lingual saturation as to have all meaning stripped from it, it seems now to actually just mean "an annoying object in my way." This was Axl Rose's argument during the *Lies* era of Guns 'N Roses, that his "niggers and po-lice" were figurative, metaphors for the daily hassles of life. No one bought it then, but history seems to have vindicated him, or language caught up to his advanced usage, here in the early 21st century on the streets of Chicago.

...

"I am punk because I simply feel that there is something wrong with our society. It's not something I can argue, it's just a feeling."

At the Fireside Bowl, the day before Thanksgiving, attending a punk show, I wander around staring at the people in attendance, awed and cowed. I'm out of fashion here as well, an anonymous anomaly once again, amongst the decked out and dressed up punks, who look about the same as they've looked since time immemorial, with the same bands written in marker on their jean jackets which I might have written on a jean jacket with a marker back in some primeval time. Not many new names added to the canonized standard set of logos and slogans in the last decade, the Crass snake still consumes itself, the Dead Kennedys "DK" logo still spells out "decay" in the phonetic language with which one reads personalized license plates. The hairstyles remain consistent as well. A guy with a towering, primped mohawk talks on a cell-phone, the scene thus located within the space/time continuum as early 21st century, the hairstyle suddenly comically functional, useful for phoning in that it keeps his hair off of his ears, as if the hairstyle was always intended to complement cell-phone usage, as if the hair had been standing in attention for years, anticipating the gadgetry to come.

Passing by me, Miles Raymer, 25, dressed in a too-tight yellow thrift store shirt, his wild curly hair looking very seventies, says to me, "man- when I was 17 I never thought I'd feel this out of place in a room full of punks." I wander into the bathroom. Two white male suburban punks, about 17, in full gear, discuss a mutual friend: "Oh, yeah, Oz, man, he's my nigger, man!" says the one. The other kid nods, as if that's a perfectly acceptable description, and he understands exactly what that entails and encompasses.

"I am punk because" quote above is from the current issue of the German fanzine *Blurr*, which contains within it an interview with a group of young punk teenagers from Düsseldorf, Germany. One of these kids, Mici, is pictured with an astounding, Thanksgiving-turkey-like plumage, multi-colored and standing straight up. His hair is not so unlike Scott Hicks' civilization-derailing mane of the Revco parking lot. Underneath this astounding display, the face of

a cherub, a doughy innocence and unconcealable wide eyes. He's been punk for about a year. The interviewer questions him regarding his motivations, here in 2002, for carrying the banner, for refusing to let the lineage die. Mici explains: "I started to get interested in left wing theory at 14. I was reading Marx and stuff like that, then at 15 I had had enough theory, I wanted action. Being a punk came not so much from a musical connection, it was the appearance, which shows radicalism and an opposition to this fucking world, this bullshit culture. That's why I thought, I'll get a mohawk."

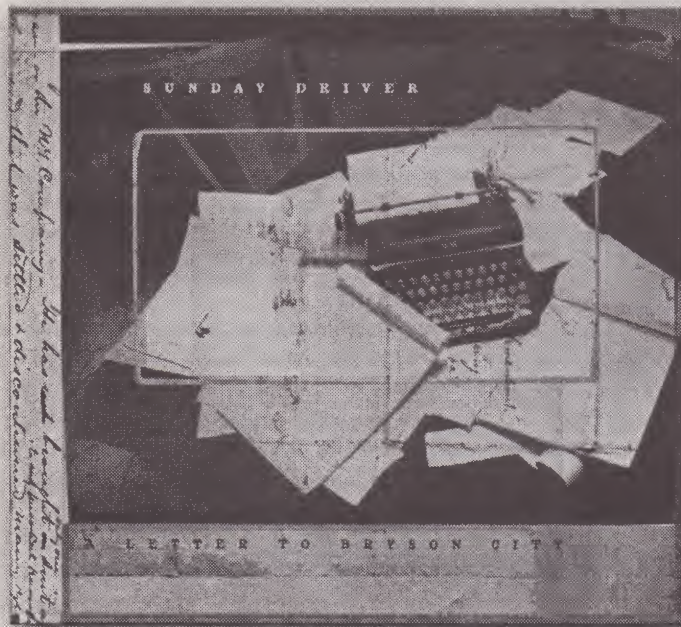
This kid, in Düsseldorf, Germany in 2002, not so unlike me, a victim of irrational sentiments and inarguable convictions. And we have other things in common, too: our appearance shocks the populace, induces mockery and ridicule. Be careful what you wish for, I'd like to tell Mici.

...

Let's celebrate our sorry lives, says Scott. Thanksgiving has been a much better holiday in my personal roster since I stopped spending it with family and started spending it with friends. Nothing against the family, but familial obligation is an obligation by definition, a form of social pressure which only that unit can generate. Friends are the people you choose to have around you because you enjoy their company, and if you have some, that's certainly worth celebrating.

I spend Thanksgiving at Roby Newton's house, thinking about Scott's story. Several people tell me their own Thanksgiving anecdotes: Nandini tells me about leaving work two years ago, her last words to her boss being, "watch out for that turkey coma," meant in reference to the sleepy state a full stomach would induce, not the actual coma the boss would slip into over the holiday weekend, never to wake again. Cynthia tells me about working at Darryl's restaurant in Raleigh, NC, during high school, and the lonely people who would come in and request a table for one on Thanksgiving, dining alone in a booth over microwaved gravy and a slab of yellow-grey reconstituted turkey patty. "People want to be with other people on Thanksgiving," Cynthia says, trying to explain the pathological behavior of the Darryl's clientele. "And these people had no one to be with. I never understood why they didn't just push the tables together. All those sad people in their individual booths—it was really depressing." And Roby tells me the saddest Thanksgiving story of all, about losing a friend and her first Thanksgiving with friends, gathered together to mourn that loss. The stories people tell are universally sad, notably so for a holiday that purports to be all about being grateful for what you've got. Maybe that's appropriate in light of what it commemorates, historically, and maybe our attempts to recast it as something else will never fully wash clean the fundamentally tragic nature which has marked the occasion an occasion worth marking. But Roby Newton is a good egg, a good punk, the only thing standing between me and a table for one at some Darryl's on the edge of town, with the teen waitresses in the kitchen tittering, "get a load of Leif Garrett at table six." Roby, who I know through punk, which is not a family and entails no obligations, which may or may not care how you look as long as you are punk on the inside, which certainly could care less whether or not the lineage thrives and survives, whether or not you become all that you threatened you would never be. ©

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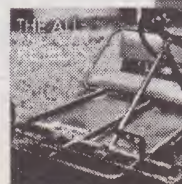
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The Usual Punishment

by Amy Knox Brown

On the witness stand, his mother refused to say Charlie had anything wrong with his mind, even though the lawyer had told her, *If we don't prove he's insane, he's going to die.*

For his last supper, Charlie Starkweather chose cold cuts over steak. Behind bars, in his blue jeans and work-shirt, he licked salt and grease from his fingers. When the lawmen arrived to take him to the execution chamber, Charlie asked, "What's your hurry?" First, they had to cut a block of fabric out of the leg of his pants to expose his knee, and then one knelt to shave the hair off Charlie's calf.

Fabric flapping around his shaven leg, wrists cuffed, he walked along the slick linoleum. Year ago, following him home from grade school, the other kids had made fun of his bow-legged walk. "Who shot your horse?" they liked to shout. Now, instead of recalling that old torment, he should have been thinking of what had brought him here: the love of his life, Caril Fugate; that love gone wrong; the way one killing made the ones that followed easier; how during those days of running he'd been conscious of his own competence, the same way he'd felt lifting heavy garbage cans to dump in the back of the truck. A mindless reliance on the body's functionality. You could take comfort in that.

The electric chair looked like an old piece of Mission Oak on someone's porch, though rigged up with wires and boxes as if an enterprising boy had got ahold of it and tried to make a spaceship.

"Sit," the warden said.

Shouldn't fear make him resist? But the chair seemed like the usual punishment he'd known growing up—tied to one of the captain's chairs in the dining room, his arms and legs bound by rope his father jerked tight, muttering, "Told you to stay out of the street." "Take money out of your mother's purse and then *lying* about it. Jesus." One time he'd been working on an art project, surrounded by cut shapes of paper and the smell of pencil lead. He dug his fingers into the pot of grainy paste and paused. Was it really made from the bodies of old horses, like they said?

Charlie sniffed. It didn't smell like meat. He put a blob against his tongue. The taste wasn't bad: sticky, all right, but with a comforting blandness. Faintly salty. Charlie'd eaten half the little container when his father came in, caught him chewing, and went for the rope. The chair's frame pressed hard against Charlie's spine, his arms pinned at elbow and wrist, rope wound around his torso, legs tied at knee and ankle. "What the hell is wrong with you?" his father asked, grunting a little as he tightened the knots.

• • •

At first the punishment was punishment: Charlie felt trapped, suffocated by the rope, the way a boy must feel in a boa constrictor's embrace. But after awhile, it didn't seem so bad—better, after all, than the strap. Charlie thought about Harry Houdini and considered how he

might free himself from these constraints and stride into the living room, throw a punch at his father's startled face and laugh.

Maybe the chair was easier for his father than the beatings, too. Tied down, Charlie sat quietly, after the initial expected fuss, as if he'd thought things over and was deciding how to mend his ways, instead of deciding, as he did, on how he would get revenge, on all the ways he would make them sorry.

• • •

And here in the chamber is like the end of a gangster movie he watched from the balcony of the Joyo Theater. A hooded man fits the strapped mask over Charlie's face and mouth. He can't see. Hands attach an electrode to his knee. Against Charlie's fingers, the chair's arm is smooth as ice. *Any last words?* He shakes his head. The leather bands around his arms and chest jerk tight. He waits to hear his father's voice—"Teach you a lesson"—and tastes again the grit and salt of paste. ©

Amy Knox Brown is a native of Lincoln, Nebraska, as was the "real" Charlie Starkweather, who is regarded as an early serial killer. (In fact, she knew the woman who was Starkweather's kindergarten teacher, who described him as a "very strange little boy.") Her fiction has appeared in Gallery, Missouri Review, Shenandoah, and other literary magazines. She is currently working on a novel. She and her husband, John McNally live in Winston-Salem with two dogs and two cats.

CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS: Keep those submission coming. Remember to put your name, contact info, and word count on the story itself. Attachments should be a Word, plain text or RTF file (RTF is best.) Word limit is around 1600. If you don't have a story to submit, write to me and tell me about something you've read recently. Or just tell me what you think of the fiction. I really like hearing from people who read the fiction section! E-mail to fiction@punkplanet.com. Thanks! —Leah Ryan



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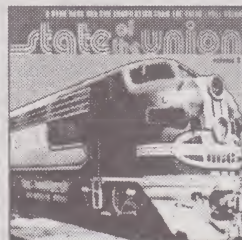
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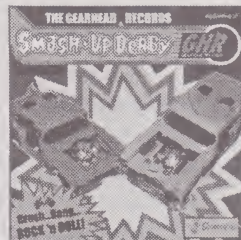
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Seed Starting

By Gregory Berlowitz

I think it was on 3-2-1 *Contact*, or maybe it was a film they showed in nursery school: A seed buried in dirt begins to split open. Suddenly, a tiny white stem with a bulbous green top tears free and starts to uncurl. It pushes its way to the surface of the dirt and, in a hazy series of flashes, it unfolds into a small, delicate plant. Fast forward to beautiful flowers, plump tomatoes, sweet smelling basil, a happy gardener digging carrots from rich earth. I was hooked—for a time. There's even one of those square Kodak 110 pictures of me in a red and blue shirt, proudly holding out a tiny seedling in a paper cup.

But I never thought about seeds again until three years ago, when my girlfriend suggested we start seeds in our apartment in preparation for a garden we had inherited. Initially her project, with me as the assistant, her work schedule became more demanding and I began spending time taking care of the little plants sprouting in our dining room. It wasn't long before I was hooked once again. I appreciated the process, the simple biology of it, watching it occur right in front of me. And that summer, eating the vegetables and herbs from our garden was more satisfying than anything I had bought at the store or even at a farmer's market.

No matter where you place yourself as a gardener—an experienced grower or an amateur wanting to grow herbs and vegetables for the first time—seed starting is a fascinating and economical way to begin. Not only can starting your own seeds bring you more variety than can be found at a gardening store or nursery, but starting your own seeds can give you earlier harvests, healthier and stronger plants, save you money, and provide you with a lot of personal satisfaction.

Getting Started

To start seeds, you need to begin with some materials. You need seeds, of course, containers in which they will grow, dirt or seed-starting mix, trays to catch the water underneath your containers, lights, a watering method (usually a spray bottle), popsicle sticks (to label your seedlings), and liquid fertilizer (seaweed or fish emulsion is best). You can spend a lot of money or a little, depending on your resourcefulness and where you shop. Throughout the article, I will list typical prices for things. Don't forget that all you really need to grow plants is seeds, dirt, light and water. Everything else just makes it easier or cleaner. Paradoxically, growing organically tends to cost more money—maybe one day this won't be true.

First, your seeds. As a beginner, you may want to stick with sure-thing plants like tomatoes, cucumbers, basil, parsley, marigolds and peppers. Last year, I bought seeds from Seed Savers

Exchange, a non-profit organization dedicated to preserving heirloom varieties from extinction. A pack of 25-50 seeds normally costs about \$2.50. But you can get seeds just about anywhere. Your local nursery will usually carry a selection of commercially produced organic and non-organic seeds, as will hardware stores, grocery stores, and even big chain stores with garden departments. You can pay as little as \$1.00 a package in larger stores. In general, though, I think you will get higher quality from a merchant who specializes in gardening. It also depends on whether you want hybrid—the most common, developed for maximum production and consistency—or heirloom varieties, which have usually been saved from last year's crop. No matter where you buy seeds from, though, make sure they are dated for the current year—old seeds don't germinate as well.

Once you have your seeds, you need to decide on containers. Any container—yogurt containers, plastic cups, egg cartons, cardboard boxes, newspaper pots—will suffice, as long as it is 1-2" wide and 2-3" deep. Simply poke a hole in the bottom of the container for drainage and wash the container thoroughly—hot soapy water, followed by a rinse of bleach and water, or white vinegar and water if you prefer—to avoid contamination (obviously, if you're using egg cartons or newspaper, skip the washing part or they'll disintegrate). Commercially manufactured seed starting cell packs are also widely available. They are made of plastic and generally hold between 24 and 72 seedlings (\$5-8). They usually come with clear plastic covers, which are helpful for germination. One drawback is their size: the seedling often fills the space before it is time to go outside and additional transplanting is necessary to prevent root circling. Miniature peat pots (about \$2.50 for 25 pots) are also available. These are advertised to be able to go straight into the ground without transplanting. I've heard accounts, however, of commercially prepared peat pots not breaking down effectively in the soil and actually hindering healthy plant growth.

Next you need a seed starting mix. Commercially prepared seed starting mixtures usually contain a blend of vermiculite (a mineral resembling mica), perlite (a white mineral foam formed from volcanic glass) and peat (partially decayed plant residue from bogs) and will run from \$5-7 a bag. As you can see, there is no soil in the mix. Soilless mix is often preferred for seed starting because it is sterile, lightweight and inexpensive. Seedlings do grow well in this mixture but will need to be treated with liquid fertilizers (fish emulsion or seaweed fertilizer—about \$5) later on in the growing process. If organic growing is important to you, it is a little harder, but definitely possible to find an organic seed

starting mix. Even organic seed starting mix—as does any soilless mixtures—will also need fertilizer. A little later, I will explore another method, less common but very effective, of seed starting using soil and compost.

Now that you have your seeds, your containers and your seed starting mix, you need just two more elements to complete your preparations: light and heat. The light source in your home is unlikely to be of the strength and consistency which seedlings require, especially if you're starting in late winter. While there are numerous seed starting light kits available (from \$15 to more than \$100 depending on features), I find inexpensive fluorescent lights (about \$6-10, including bulbs) to work perfectly well. Before your seeds germinate, you won't need the lights, but once the *true leaves* appear (I'll explain what that means later), your seedlings will need direct light not more than 2" above them for 12-16 hours a day. The easiest way to do this is to stack your lights on wooden blocks. Books, or boxes so they can be gradually raised as the seedlings grow.

Finally, most germinating seeds need heat and do best at around 70°F. Again, while you can buy heating pads and boxes specifically designed to warm your seeds (\$20-75), I simply place my seedlings on trays on top of, or close to, the radiator. If you don't have radiators, try the top of the refrigerator, or the warmest room in your place. Fortunately, once the seeds germinate, they no longer need heat, so this is a short-term issue.

Planting Your Seeds

OK, you have your materials and are ready to begin. When should you start? First you need to determine your region's frost-free date (I have listed some online sources for frost-free information at the end of the article). Then use the seed-planting sidebar to figure out how far ahead of time you need to start your seedlings. While you can start your different vegetables and flowers all at different times, this will obviously require more space and effort. In the past, I've started all of my seedlings at the same time and haven't had any major problems.

Once you've worked out the particulars, plant away! This is probably a good time to put your containers on a tray. (I use a plastic cafeteria tray. If you use a metal tray like a cookie sheet, be sure to line it with plastic so it doesn't rust.) In a bucket or a large bowl, water your seed starting mix. Packages will provide directions, but generally, you want your seed starting medium to be thoroughly wet, but not muddy. A little practice with a small amount of mix will make this simple enough. Fill your clean container with the wet mix, poke a small hole in the mix with the clean tip of an eraser,

and drop your seed in, one or two per container. Most seeds—contrary to popular package directions—only want to be submerged about three times their thickness and want to be lightly covered with either a bit more of the mix, or with sphagnum peat moss (about \$5/bag), which will help retain moisture and is a natural fungicide. After your seeds are planted, water the tops of the containers with the gentle setting on your spray bottle. If you've bought containers with clear plastic covers, put those on top to contain the humidity. Otherwise, cover the containers with plastic wrap or glass. You've done all you can do. Lay the trays on your heat source and wait.

A Brief Aside About Soil Blocks

While waiting for your seeds to germinate, I'd like to explore another seed starting option which I discovered when a friend gave me a book on organic gardening for my birthday. In the book, Eliot Coleman's *The New Organic Grower*, I first read about *soil blocks*, an alternative to using containers in seed starting. Coleman prefers soil blocks for many reasons. For one, they are less expensive than containers. Two, they are based on a concept of using air as walls. A typical growing medium has solid walls, which the roots eventually grow against. If not transplanted quickly, the roots will wrap themselves around the container endlessly, making them less healthy and more difficult to plant in the garden. In a soil block, however, roots will grow to the edge of the soil and encounter nothing but air. The roots don't want to be exposed, so they stop growing at the edge of the soil block and wait to be transplanted. Third, a soil block is not soil-less like the typical seed starting mix, but consists of elements found in a garden: soil, compost, peat, sand (used to promote aeration), greensand (also called glauconite, this gives the soil micronutrients), colloidal phosphate (a clay material which enriches the soil), lime (used to adjust the pH of the mix), perlite (sometimes used instead of sand) and natural fertilizers. (Depending on the scale of your garden, you probably do not need all of these elements.) You need not fertilize or otherwise manipulate the soil block once the seedling has emerged because the block has everything it needs. The fibrous qualities of the peat and compost retain water far more efficiently than a soil-less mix, and transplanting in the garden is simply a matter of digging a hole, easier than extracting a seedling from its container, which is a more delicate operation. Finally, you make soil blocks yourself.

Last year, I decided to try soil blocks. I found a soil block maker online for about \$25, but a friend built one for me out of wood (materials, about \$3, time about 45 minutes). I learned that for a small scale, urban gardener, I needed only compost

(\$5/bag), brown peat (\$5/bag), colloidal phosphate (\$3/box) and greensand (\$3/box), all of which I bought at a local gardening store. I mixed these in the proportions of 16 parts peat by four parts compost, 1/4 part greensand, and 1/4 part colloidal phosphate, with a lot more water than I would have with a soil-less mix. Not only will this mix hold far more water, it actually *needs* more water in order to maintain its form and strength. Coleman recommends using one part water to three parts mix, until the whole mixture feels like paste. Using my 2" square wood block maker (simply four 2" squares of wood screwed together, sanded lightly and finished with salad oil finish), I formed blocks of the mix (sandcastle-style, so you're forming the blocks with the block-maker and then letting them stand on their own) and laid them on my plastic cafeteria trays. Then I poked holes in the tops of the blocks, dropped in my seeds, watered them very well, and covered them with plastic.

Germination

Germination, depending on the type and condition of the seeds, can take as little as three days and as long as two to three weeks. The first thing to appear will be a set of false leaves. Looking into your mix, you can sometimes see the uncurling of the tiny plant from its hardened shell, and the white tendrils of the stretching trunk turning green as it is exposed to light. This, to me, is the most exciting time of the process. Pushing up from the soil (or soilless mix), the seeds are lifted from dormancy and are transformed into plants anxious to grow, flower and fruit. And once they've sprouted, it's time to turn on the lights and remove them from the heat. This gets a little tricky, as different seeds will sprout at different times. This is where your popsicle sticks come in (labeling sticks from a garden store, \$4 for 100). Since you may move your seedlings around, it's crucial to be able to identify them. I simply write the name of the plant on the stick and push it into the dirt or soil block. You also may need to separate your plants to put some under light while others are still germinating. If you're using separate containers, this is easy enough. If you're using store-bought plastic cell pack trays, you can cut these apart with a scissor. Remember to put the lights not more than 2" above the plants and leave them on for 12-16 hours per day. Once you've placed the lights over the seedlings, don't forget to the plastic covering.

The first leaves that appear are round and are called *cotyledon* leaves. Within a few days, a second set of leaves, larger and more defined than the first, will appear. These are the plant's *true leaves*. Now you are ready to add fertilizer, if you're using the container method. Since they're so small, a half-strength mixture of liquid fertilizer and water will do. Just spray it on with your spray bottle. If you can spray onto the soil or mix rather than on the leaves, this is better for the plant. (This is also true for watering—getting the water as directly as possible to the roots is best for the plant.) For the next few weeks, as your frost free date approaches, you simply need to take care of your plants. Keep them moist and keep them in light. If you're using soil blocks, it becomes a little challenging to keep them wet. The best method I found was to pour water directly onto the trays. The soil blocks soak up only what they need.

If you're using small containers, you may have to transplant after a few weeks. It's hard to tell when a plant needs to be transplanted, but if you sense that the seedling is becoming too large for its container, it probably is. Some signs of this is that the plant is leggy (too long between sets of its leaves) or that plants are beginning to grow together. To transplant, use larger containers and repeat the process of planting. Fill the clean containers with your wet mix, dig a little hole in the middle and insert your whole seedling, including its mix.

Moving your plants outside

The environment outside, of course, is very different than your home. These seedlings have never experienced real sun, real wind, real rain, insects or predators. It is your job to get them ready. Don't be afraid of touching your seedlings. Gently tickling the leaves will make the stems stronger. As you get closer to transplant time, you'll want to ruffle them even more often. They're very fragile, but they need to be toughened up before they go outside. About a week to 10 days

before you're going to transplant, on a moderate day, bring your plants outside for a couple of hours. Do this a little more each day,

When to Start Seeds Indoors

Crop	When to Transplant (in weeks relative to frost-free date)	
	When to start inside (in weeks relative to transplant time)	
Artichokes	8 before	3 before
Basil	6-8 before	1 after
Beans	2-4 before	1-2 after
Beets*	4-6 before	2 before
Broccoli	4-8 before	2 before
Brussel Sprouts	4-8 before	3 before
Cabbage	4-8 before	4 before
Cauliflower	4-8 before	2 before
Celery	6 before	1-2 after
Collards	4-6 before	4 before
Corn*	2-4 before	0-2 after
Cucumber	3-4 before	1-2 after
Dahlias	8 before	1-2 after
Eggplant	6-12 before	2-3 after
Endive	6-8 before	1-2 after
Geraniums	12 before	1-2 after
Impatiens	10 before	1-2 after
Kale	4-6 before	4 before
Kohlrabi	4-8 before	4 before
Leeks	10-12 before	1-2 after
Lettuce	4-8 before	3-4 before
Marigolds	6 before	1-2 after
Melons	2-4 before	2 after
Onions	6-12 before	4 before
Pansies	12 before	1-2 after
Parsley	9-10 before	2-3 before
Peas*	3-4 before	6-8 before
Peppers	6-14 before	2 after
Pumpkins	3-4 before	2 after
Snapdragons	10 before	1-2 after
Spinach	4-6 before	3-6 before
Squash	3-6 before	2 before
Swiss Chard	4-6 before	2 before
Tomatoes	6-8 before	1-2 after
Watermelons	3-4 before	1-2 after
Zinnias	6 before	1-2 after

* These plants are not typically started indoors, but they can be

until a day or two before transplanting, when you should leave them out overnight.

On a day with not much wind but plenty of sun, bring your plants to their final destination. Whether you're planting in the ground or in pots, prepare your area. If you've used soil blocks, simply dig a hole and cover them up. If you've used containers, you must be a little more careful. The best way is to turn the container sideways so the plant and the soil or mix slide out from the container. If you must handle the plant, it is better to grasp the roots or the leaves rather than the stems. If your plants are root-bound, you'll have to cut into the roots with a sharp knife in order to stimulate them into growing in the new soil. If you have transplanted from the original seed starting container to a larger pot, this probably won't be necessary.

Once the plants are in the dirt, water them well to help them establish their roots, and you're finished. Congratulations. You've gone from seed to plant. Now keep your garden well watered, try to weed once in a while, and wait for your vegetables, herbs, and flowers to arrive.

And a final thought. Penny for penny, is growing your own vegetables cheaper than buying them? Maybe or maybe not. It depends on where you shop and on how many vegetables you eat, not to mention the hours you will put into this whole process. But there is more to growing your own food than simple economics: there is self-satisfaction, the time-honored principle of self-reliance, the pleasure of getting your hands dirty, and the contribution you make to your own food chain. I think it's well worth the effort. ©

Resources (mostly online):

Seeds

Seed Savers Exchange
3076 North Winn Road
Decorah, Iowa 52101
563-382-5990
www.seedsavers.org

Sow Organic Seed
PO Box 527
Williams, OR 97544
(888)709-7333
www.organicseed.com

Heirloom Seeds
P.O. Box 245
West Elizabeth, PA 15088-0245
(412) 384-0852
www.heirloomseeds.com

Seed Starting Supplies and Advice

Brooklyn Botanic Garden
www.bbg.org/gar2/topics/sustainable/handbooks/propagation/6.html#blockparty

Smith & Hawken
1-800-940-1170

www.smithandhawken.com/html/resource/rsc_seeds/rsc_seeds03.jhtml

http://www.tropical-seeds.com/tech_forum/bibliography/seed_starters.pdf

[www.snow-pond.com/Seedstrt/seedstrt.html#Soil Blocking Equipment](http://www.snow-pond.com/Seedstrt/seedstrt.html#SoilBlockingEquipment)

www.plantea.com/seedstart.htm

www.homeharvestseeds.com/seedstartingtipsindoor.htm

www.veseys.com (they have an organic seed starting mix)

Organic Growing

www.organicgardening.com

Peaceful Valley Farm Supply
(they have soil blockers)

P.O. Box 2209

Grass Valley, CA 95945

(530) 272-4769

(888) 784-1722

www.groworganic.com

Gardens Alive!

5100 Schenley Place

Lawrenceburg, Indiana 47025

812-537-8650

www.gardensalive.com

General Gardening Resources

www.yougrowgirl.com

www.gardenweb.com

www.ibiblio.org/ecolandtech/gardening-page.html

www.backyardgardener.com

USDA Hardiness Zone Map and

Frost Free Information

www.thegardenlink.com/html/USDA_map.htm

www.thegardenlink.com/html/frost.htm

www.mhuss.com/rozes/USDAZones.html#

www.organicgardening.com/library/frostdates.html

www.almanac.com/garden/garden.frostchart.html

DIY SEX EARLY TO BED

by sex lady searah

Dear Sex Lady,

Being one of the coolest girlfriends in the world, my dame has mentioned that she might be interested in a threesome. Hell, I don't even know if I'm that cool, but if I should decide that I am, where do we go from there? I don't know if it makes more sense to seek out someone we'll never have to see again, or face embarrassment with someone we know, but we can trust. Even from there, what's the best way to find new people? I've heard of "swinger directories," but I can't seem to find one. On the other hand, how would we approach an acquaintance with tact? Any help would be much appreciated. Thanks!

Well, my friend, you are one lucky guy. A ton of guys out there would kill for a girlfriend who would suggest a three-way, but don't let that fact dictate whether or not you go through with it.

The most important thing when approaching the idea of a threesome with your partner is that everyone involved has to be really into the idea. If you are a bit unsure, or your girlfriend has some last minute misgivings, don't do it! Sharing your partner with another person can be *way* super-fun, but it also has the potential to be way super-messy.

If either one of you feels pressured into doing this, somewhere along the way it is going to come back and bite you in the ass big time. So before you even go looking for a third, talk it out with your lady and make sure you are both on the same page (incidentally, it has nothing to do with being "cool." There are *plenty* of very un-cool people who do this kind of thing, and lots of way-cool people who don't.).

If you decide that you both can handle a new hot mama (or papa) in the mix, figure out some ground rules for the event. Obviously you can't plan *exactly* what is going to happen (well, you probably could, but what fun would that be) but you should make clear to each other what you expect. For example, maybe your GF doesn't want you to fuck the third (lets call her Betty from now on, although it could be a Bob—you didn't specify) in the ass or maybe you don't want your GF to use her strap-on on Bob. Some people find, when faced with the prospect of sharing their partner in a threesome or an open relationship, that if you have some activities that are reserved just for the two of you, it is easier to maintain boundaries and keep sex with just the two of you special. Sit down and make a list. I know it may sound corny, but it can really help eliminate the "but I thought you said you *wanted* me to fuck her in the butt" fight later.

OK, so you both decided that you do indeed want to have this threesome and that you both can handle watching each other lick another girl's pussy (or suck another guy's cock). Great. Now to

your question of how to find this Betty or Bob. This can be really hard or really easy, but there is no way of knowing which it is going to be. The couple times I've had three-ways, they have literally "just happened." I couldn't even tell you how and I really regret that I didn't pay more attention because I seem to have lost my mojo in that department.

You can go either way on the friend/stranger question. Plenty of people have had sex with their friends once and moved on with no problems at all (ask any gay male). I'm a big advocate of having sex with friends, but too many of my friends are in partnered relationships and feel like sex with other people is a big no no. I strongly advise you to not choose a friend who is in a monogamous relationship that could be jeopardized by an outside romp. Even if your Betty or Bob is willing to cheat on their partner, you don't want to be remembered as the person who ruined that relationship, even if it is not really your fault.

This also isn't the time to pick the chick that you have secretly been in love with for years or the guy that confessed his love to you when you were in college. You don't want this to ruin your relationship with your GF or your friend, so pick someone you don't have a messy history with. Sex does have the potential to bring out all kinds of emotions in people and if you are secretly in love with your chosen Betty/Bob, your GF might see that and *boy*, that could get ugly.

If you have a friend that you both find hot, is sexually open-minded and neither one of you harbors secret romantic love for, you can take a risk and hit on her/him. Maybe one night over drinks bring the topic up in a general way. "So have you ever been in a threesome?" is a great way to feel someone out. If she/he responds with a loud "EW, THAT IS SO GROSS, YUCK!", then it is time to move on. But if Betty or Bob responds with a casual "indeed I have" or a "no, but I've always wanted to . . .", then you have an opening to make your move. You may get rejected, you may get a maybe, or you may be rewarded with a cocky smile and hand on your knee (or both your knees). Thing is, you will never know 'till you try and if your friend is cool, hopefully the worst thing they will do is say "No, thanks" and you can pretend you were kidding and everyone moves on.

You can also, of course, go the stranger route. It could be as easy as picking up someone in a bar (although I think that might not be all that easy to accomplish, but then I never go to bars, so what do I know). Let me advise you, however, to *not* go to a lesbian bar looking for a bi-girl for your threesome. Most dykes find it very offensive to be approached by a straight guy looking to do two girls at

once. Go to a straight meat-market kind of bar or look for any special events that involve the word sex. If you live in a big city, obviously, the bar scene will be bigger and more varied, but you may have to try some places that you wouldn't step foot in otherwise.

You also might try your luck with the swingers scene. There is a whole huge world out there of swingers: they have conventions, parties, and lots of clubs. Nina Hartley (my hero) even made a "Guide to Swinging" video. So just get on the Internet, type "Swingers" into Google and you'll get back 2,220,000 hits. Now you have to wade through them to try and find something in your area and that isn't too creepy (yes, some swingers are creepy). By narrowing my search, I found all kinds of parties, chat rooms, and info on swinging in Chicago in about three minutes. There are books you can get on the lifestyle (from Amazon.com even, although I suggest you try a local independent bookstore first) that also might be a good place to start. One thing though, from what I know of the "lifestyle" scene (as it is often called for some reason), boys touching boys is usually pretty uncool. That may work just fine for you, but if you are looking to have a Bob instead of a Betty, you probably want to stay clear of the straight-identified swingers scene.

OK, so maybe you don't have an eligible friend, the bar scene didn't work out and the swinger scene just isn't you (and I'll be honest, if you read *Punk Planet*, you may find the swingers scene is very much *not* you), you can always put an ad in the local alternative weekly paper (papers like the *Village Voice*, the *Chicago Reader*, the *SF Weekly* . . . that kind of thing. I wouldn't recommend going to your smalltown daily and expect them to run the ad). I have no idea how effective they are, but they are usually cheap and at the very least, listening to the responses you get will probably be fun. This way you can advertise for exactly what you are looking for ("Blond bi-girl with small tits and a love of vinyl skirts who likes to be spanked") and the potential Betty/Bob know what to expect from you. If someone sounds cool, meet him or her for coffee and see if any sparks fly. You never know what you might find.

Oh, one last note . . . In the course of my research into the world of threesomes and swinging, I have come across the suggestion that if you want to have a threesome but can't find a third or one person is still unsure about the whole thing, you can get a "love doll" and "she" can be that third. I don't recommend that route. It's very creepy. ☹

Got questions? E-mail me at diysex@punkplanet.com. Live in or plan on visiting Chicago? Swing by my shop, Early to Bed, at 5232 N. Sheridan. Just want to buy some kick-ass sex toys? Shop online at www.early2bed.com. Thanks!

DIY food EVERYTHING THAT

Guilty Pleasures

Of all our taste sensations, sweetness is most preferred and favored. Sweet-tasting foods are not imperative to our diet, but are traditionally enjoyed after a meal. We restrain ourselves from consuming these foods for health reasons, or more often than not, because we consider them excessive. But sweet foods taste good and, consequently, westerners consume huge amounts of sugar, specifically refined sugar.

By nature, sugar is essentially a sweet, water-soluble substance extracted from sugar cane or sugar beets. Scientifically referred to as 'sucrose,' it linguistically derives from the Sanskrit word *sakara*, meaning 'grain.' With its stimulant properties, we've become a society hooked on the stuff—a drug for all ages. To satisfy our demand for sweetness, refined sugar has infiltrated our food supply, appearing in the most unsuspecting foods.

Its abundance as a globally produced commodity gives food companies easy access to this relatively inexpensive ingredient. Consequently, our food choices are overwrought with processed, sugared food items. The big business of refined sugar and its steady infiltration into our food supply has a long and sordid past. The refined sugar manufacturer's economic gain is fueled by the insatiable sweet tooth of the consumer.

Indirectly and unbeknownst to the consumer, sugar is an ingredient in most food products. It's estimated that 75 to 80 percent of our refined sugar consumption is hidden in the foods we eat. Forget about that guilty pleasure in having dessert tonight—take a look at a mayonnaise label. Sugar is an ingredient found in unsuspecting foods, varying from bouillon cubes and prepared meats to the more obvious breakfast cereal.

As an additive, sugar has been so overly used in food production, that our tastes have become conditioned to it. Until the 20th century the average person annually consumed approximately four and a half pounds of sugar. This has now reached unprecedented levels in industrialized societies, annually topping out at 139 pounds per person.

Particularly in America, eating patterns have become the consumption of empty calories. These empty calories, or *nutrient deficient foods*, not only satisfy our sweet tooth, but also help us to buy into an American image, like starting your day with PopTarts.

Marketers have exploited this by turning bad eating into good looking imagery. Scenes of beautiful people drinking sodas or families eating sugary breakfast cereal together now define the American diet. According to advertisers, we all should drink Coke because it is "it." Soda is primarily sugar-based and the largest source of refined sugar in our diet—an average can of soda provides seven teaspoons of sugar out of the recommended maximum of 20 teaspoons per day. Marketers know that we love sweet food—the

sweeter the better. But we didn't always eat this way. Just when did sugar begin to coat society?

Sugar's virulent past

Honey was the first sweetener known to the Western world, first introduced by the ancients (Greece, India, Egypt and Rome). Greeks and Romans used it only for medicinal purposes. Persia and ancient Arabia were the first to cultivate sugar in the fourth century. It wasn't until the Moors invaded Spain in the eighth century that sugar was introduced to the Western world. Its scarcity sparked a desire for this exotic ingredient that only the wealthy could afford. Throughout the Middle Ages, sugar was considered a luxury.

It wasn't until the 15th century that sugar became more readily available and less expensive as new sources of sugar cane production were discovered in the West Indies. Together, production (mainly by slaves, mind you) and availability generated consumer demand. Societal preference for sugar and sweetness coincided with the breadth and might of the colonizers as they expanded their territorial gains (Sidney Mintz wrote an entire book on this topic: *Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History*).

Sugar beet crops were introduced in the 18th century as an alternative form of sugar production, which centralized the business for the Western world. Grown primarily in northern climates, Europe found its own viable crop production, and soon after, its own refineries. The early 19th century English embargo on sugar trade led Napoleon to respond by ordering France and its territories to begin production of sugar beets from crop to processing. Within two years, nearly 300 refineries were established and with it, another significant increase in sugar consumption. By the 19th century, Europe was addicted. It became a substance integrated into the daily diet.

Since that time, world production of sugar has been on the rise without any significant drops—remarkable for a global commodity. But sugar's refined whiteness didn't come without costs.

"Purely" manufactured

Refined white sugar isn't naturally white. In sugar production from farm to table, the most profitable step is the last—refining brown sugar to white. About three-fifths of the world's refined sugar derives from sugar cane, while two-fifths is derived from sugar beets. Refining is a lengthy, energy consuming, and chemical process. It takes many steps of production for a green stalk, or red beet, to reach sugar's familiar bleached whiteness.

Early types of sugar were not granulated or refined. Large loaves or blocks, ranging in color from ivory to brown, had to be chiseled off and ground to a powder with a mortar and pestle. In today's sugar production, however, this same style of unrefined

EATS, LIVES

by stacey gengo

brown sugar is commonly consumed in countries harvesting sugar cane. This brown sugar—considered inedible by western manufacturing standards—contains trace impurities, like bits of the cane plant. As sugar's bleached whiteness signifies its purity, the whiter the sugar, the higher its value. Manufacturers have gone to great lengths to present us with pure white refined sugar.

This belabored process, along with the history of getting refined sugar to our tables should be enough to curb our affection for the stuff, but it's not. Sweetness is an acquired taste that begins with mother's milk—which today we're weaned off of and into refined sugar.

The proliferation of sugar in our society has grown out of control. It pays to be a conscious consumer. Read food labels; pay attention to just how many spoonfuls of sugar you put in your next cup of coffee; use raw sugar or natural alternatives like honey or fruit when you can; limit purchases of processed foods. Over time, these little changes will have some effects. They are small steps to modify our taste, but not our affection, for sugar.

Types of sugar

Granulated sugar, white sugar, or table sugar—most familiar and commonly available.

Superfine sugar, or castor sugar—used most often in cocktails and delicate baked items, like meringue. Essentially pulverized granulated sugar and, rather than purchasing, can be done yourself with a blender.

Confectioners' sugar, or powdered sugar—powdered granulated sugar mixed with cornstarch to prevent caking. Labeled XXXX is finer than those packages labeled XXX.

Brown sugar (light and dark)—made from cane sugar only. Color depends on the amount of molasses, the darker the color, the stronger taste. It is manufactured by adding molasses to refined sugar with artificial colorings. One additive, caramel, is burnt sugar. Once opened, to keep fresh, place a small apple slice in an open plastic bag placed in the container, seal in an airtight container and place in a cool space or the refrigerator.

Raw sugar—less refined and coarse in texture. Produced in the first stage of the crystallization process. Made from sugar beets, it's a yellow color. It is brown when made from cane sugar.

Demerara sugar—raw sugar from the Demerara region of Guyana.

Barbados sugar—moist, raw sugar, finer in texture than Demerara.

Turbinado sugar—raw sugar that has been steam cleaned. Light brown or blond colored, have a slight molasses flavor. ©

A sweet alternative

Honey and fruit juices were sweeteners long before the processing of sugar. This is an African dessert using both alternatives. It originates from Malawi, a country that produces sugar as an export crop.

Sweet potato pudding

2 peeled and chopped sweet potatoes
3 teaspoons honey
2 tablespoons margarine
1 egg white
Juice and grated rind of one orange

Heat oven to 400°.

1. Add sweet potatoes to a saucepan of boiling water. Cook until soft, about 10 minutes.
2. Drain potatoes; place in a mixing bowl and mash.
3. Stir in honey, margarine, orange juice and rind, mixing until combined.
4. Whisk egg white until stiff peaks form and gently fold into the mixture.
5. Grease an ovenproof dish and add pudding mixture.
6. Bake 45 minutes to one hour, or until lightly browned.

Want to talk food? Drop me a line: slynn@earthlink.net. See you next bi-month!

DIY health

IN SICKNESS & NO WEALTH

by angel page

Breast Care for women and men

Sweet tits, rack, biggin's, mountains, boobs, breasts, puppies, knockers, gazongas, air bags, melons, headlights, jugs, cans, fun bags, hooters, meal tickets, pillows. Whatever you want to call them we all have em' and we all are at risk of getting breast cancer. *This includes men as well!*

Did you know?

- Breast cancer is the second leading cause of cancer death in women in the United States.
- This year, 203,500 women and 1,500 men will be diagnosed with breast cancer.
- Approximately 39,600 women and 400 men will die from breast cancer this year.
- Every three minutes a woman is diagnosed with breast cancer. Every 12 minutes a woman dies from breast cancer.
- Most women who get breast cancer have no family history of the disease.
- Women or their partners discover 90 percent of all lumps.
- Sixty percent of American women do not do breast self-exams regularly.

The Risks

A woman's chance of getting breast cancer increases with age. For a woman born today, her risk by age 30 is one out of 2,000.

By age 40: 1 out of 233 women will get breast cancer
By age 50: 1 out of 53 women will get breast cancer
By age 60: 1 out of 22 women will get breast cancer
By age 70: 1 out of 13 women will get breast cancer
By age 80: 1 out of 9 women will get breast cancer

Your Risk increases if you:

- Had your first period before age 12.
- Never have children.
- Have more than one drink of alcohol per day
- Are overweight after menopause or gain weight as an adult.
- Are exposed to large amounts of radiation, such as having very frequent spine x-rays during scoliosis treatment or treatment for Hodgkin's disease.
- Have a poor diet—you know what I'm talking about, consuming too much junk food!!!

Also, exposure to hormones, specifically estrogen, (oral contraceptives and hormone replacement therapy), is thought to increase a woman's risk of developing breast cancer. The good news is that after you stop taking birth control pills, your risk decreases after about 10 years.

Warning signs of breast cancer in women:

- A lump or thickening in or near the breast or in the underarm area. Please note: Breast lumpiness with tenderness or pain at certain times of the month is called fibrocystic breast changes. These breast changes are common and do not increase your chance of getting breast cancer. Make sure you do a breast self-exam each month. Get to know the way your breasts look and feel. Learn what is normal for you.
- A change in size or shape of the breast
- Nipple discharge or tenderness
- The nipple pulled back or inverted into the breast
- Ridges or pitting of the breast
- A change in the way the skin of the breast, areola, or nipple looks or feels (such as warm, swollen, red or scaly).

Warning signs of breast cancer in men:

Men are usually diagnosed at a later stage, because they are less likely to report any symptoms. Treatment of breast cancer is the same as treatment for women patients and usually includes a combination of surgery, radiation, chemotherapy, and/or hormone therapy. Men's risk for breast cancer increases if you:

- Have family members (male or female) with breast cancer.
- Have your chest area exposed to radiation treatment.
- Take estrogen for a sex change.
- Have higher levels of the female hormone estrogen (common with liver diseases such as cirrhosis).
- Have a genetic condition such as Klinefelter's syndrome, a chromosomal abnormality found in males. Most males have one X and one Y chromosome (XY). Males with Klinefelter's Syndrome usually have two X-chromosomes (XXY) and sometimes more than two. This chromosomal abnormality affects the normal development of sexual and physical characteristics of boys affecting approximately one in 500 males across all ethnic and racial groups.

Breast Self-Exam

The ideal time to do a breast self-exam is 10 days after your period starts. I found a very handy tool on the web; it's an automated breast self-exam reminder. You can submit your e-mail and receive a monthly e-mail self-exam reminder. If you are interested, visit www.breasthealthnetwork.com.

The following steps are based on American Cancer Society guidelines:

1. Begin by looking at your breast in a mirror. Check both breasts for anything unusual, such as discharge from the nipples, puckering, or dimpling.
2. Next, standing in front of a mirror or in the shower, place your

right arm behind your head. Soapy hands glide easily over the wet skin, making it easy to check how your breasts feel.

3. Use the finger pads (the top third of your fingers) of the three middle fingers of your left hand to feel for lumps or thickening in your right breast.

4. Press firmly enough to know how your breast feels. If you are not sure how hard to press, ask a health care provider. Learn what your breasts feel like most of the time. A firm ridge in the lower curve of each breast is normal.

5. Examine your breasts the same way each time. You can choose to move in a circle up and down, or from the center out.

6. Now examine your left breast the same way, using your right-hand finger pads.

7. Repeat the exam lying down. Place a pillow under your right shoulder and roll slightly to the left. Put your right arm over your head and examine the outer half of your right breast. Next, examine your left breast the same way.

8. If you notice any changes or have found a lump, **do not panic**. Eight out of 10 breast lumps are not cancerous. But *absolutely* make an appointment to see a healthcare provider.

Implant Dangers

Since the topic of this column is breast health I will segue to my soapbox and tell you about the dangers of silicone and saline implants. Men, this is for you too. Some men may want to build up their chest or calf muscles with implants, and surgeons' use the same material that is used in breast implants.

All the information below I learned while visiting the *Silicone Holocaust* website. It's truly shocking what the truth will show. I cannot even do justice with words; you must see it for yourself, as I'm sure Pamela Anderson won't be there to tell us of the dangers.

The website first starts with the history of the implant and the cover-ups by Dow Chemical. Next you will visit picture-by-picture, story-by-story of the horrible symptoms and deformities these women have suffered. These women were all healthy individuals, and shortly after the implants were inserted, many of them experienced one or multiple symptoms listed below:

- **Lupus** – an autoimmune disease; causes inflammation of the skin, blood vessels, joints, and other tissues
- **Birth Defects** – self explanatory
- **Breast Tumors** – both cancerous and non-cancerous
- **Hematomas** – a swelling that contains blood
- **Severe Disfigurement** – the pictures on this website say it all!
- **Fibromyalgia** – chronic achy muscle pain that has no obvious physical cause.

• **Autoimmune problems** – when your own immune system attacks your own body.

• **Skin rashes, infections & welts**

• **Bladder incontinence**

• **Scleroderma** – connective tissue disorder characterized by abnormal thickening of the skin, which causes the following symptoms; abnormal sensitivity to cold in the extremities, swelling of the hands and feet, pain and stiffness of the joints, digestive system & gastrointestinal tract problems, dry mucus membranes, extreme fatigue, generalized weakness, and/or weight loss.

• **Gangrene of the skin and/or muscles** – body tissues die and eventually decays.

• **Capsular contracture** – scar tissue surrounds the implant, making it hard, painful and sometimes misshapen.

• **Multiple Sclerosis** – a progressive and degenerative disorder of the central nervous system; can cause any of the following; dizziness, emotional changes, blurred vision, double vision, loss of balance, nausea and/or vomiting, slurred speech, fatigue, difficulty in breathing, impotence. This is a terrible disease.

• **Pleurisy** – inflammation of the lining of the heart and lungs . . . I had this once, and it was soooo incredibly painful! These poor women!

• **Asthma** – constriction of the airways—making it difficult to breath.

• **Polyneuropathy** – the nerves in your body (aside from your spinal cord and brain) are damaged or not working correctly. Patients describe the pain using a variety of words, including "burning," "raw skin," "skin sensitivity," "like walking on ground glass," and others.

• **Polymyositis** – an inflammatory muscle disease that causes varying degrees of decreased muscle power. Eventually, patients have difficulty rising from a sitting position, climbing stairs, lifting objects, or reaching overhead. Trouble with swallowing may occur.

• **Rheumatoid arthritis** – joint inflammation, this is another autoimmune disease. In this case, it affects your joints.

• **DEATH!**

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I would love to hear feedback from you! My e-mail address is dijhealth@yahoo.com

Selected References for this column:

The Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation

The Well Workplace, Vol.4, No. 8, October 2002.

American Cancer Society

Our Bodies, Ourselves, by the Boston Women's Health Book Collective

Scleroderma Foundation

The Department of Pain Medicine & Palliative Care

Support Path website

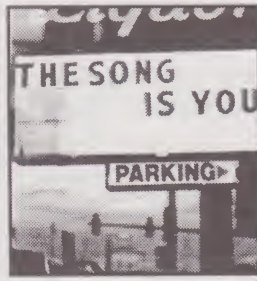


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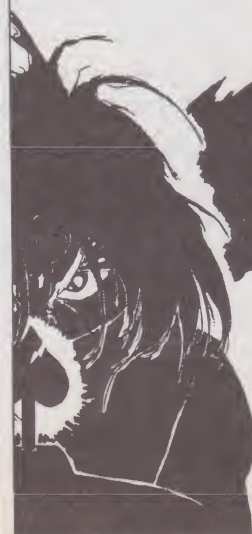
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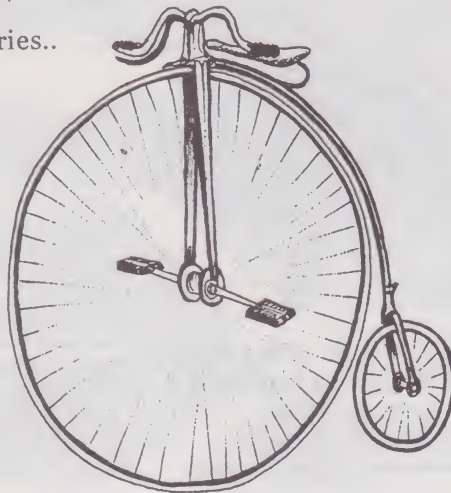
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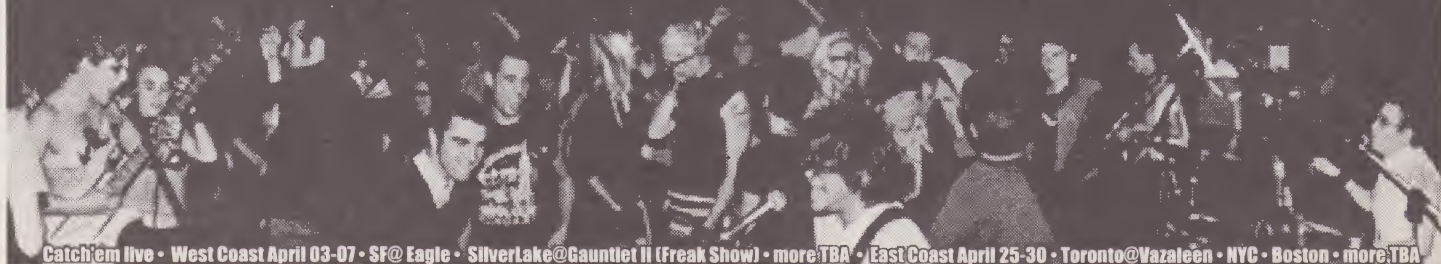
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music

THIS ISSUE'S REVIEWERS: Eric Action (EA), Amy Adoyzie (AA), Vincent Chung (VC), Brian Czarnik (BC), Jen Dolan (JD), Art Ettinger (AE), Melissa Geils (MG), Jason Gitzlaff (JG), Tim Kuehl (TK), Dan Laidman (DAL), Bart Niedzialkowski (BN), Kyle Ryan (KR), George Sanchez (GBS), Patrick Sayers (PS), Neal Shah (NS), Dan Sinker (DS), Andy Slob (AS), Jillian Steinberger (JS), Annie Tomlin (AT)

A Life Once Lost - The Fourth Plague Flies, 7"

A rerelease of the CDEP on Robotic Empire, this dish is part of the ever-so-diluted metallic hard-core platter. Heavily technical, heavily diverse, and just plain heavy, this 7" offers up skilled craftsmanship, but lacks originality. Repackaged with Jake Bannon's exquisite trademark design and remastered for colored vinyl. (VC)
Deathwish Inc., 10 Lothrop St., Beverly, MA 01915, www.deathwishinc.com

Abilene - Two Guns, Twin Arrows, CD

This is a very impressive collection of songs from former members of June of '44, Radio Flyer, and Lustre King, among others. This marks their second release, mixing odd time signatures and engaging vocals with what, in my opinion, makes this band such a gem: jazzy trumpet lines flowing throughout the songs. The trumpet never becomes overbearing; it adds a new element to their songwriting that few bands of their genre have embraced. The songs maintain a mellow feel, but they keep an edge unlike anything I have ever heard. (TK)
54°40' or Fight!, PO Box 1601, Acme, MI 49610-1601, www.fiftyfourfortyortight.com

Acro-Brats, The - Kicking & Screaming, CD

Bouncy, catchy pop-punk with a garage-rock attitude. Think more leather jackets than Hurley wear. I bet these songs rock more live. (JG)
Susspool Records, 1269 Commonwealth Ave., Box 11, Allston, MA 02134, www.theacrobrats.com

Adam John Killip & The Rusty String Breakers / Buzzkill - split, 7"

A 7" study in how different arrangements can totally alter the mood and feeling of a song. Both groups recorded the same songs. One side has the fucked-up folk styles of Adam John Killip and Co. A wonderfully deep alt-country group, their original, "80% Proof" has the raucous bravado of the Mekons and the tender transparency of Whiskeytown. For being a simple set up of guitars,

drums, bass, keys, and a harmonica, the sound of the Rusty String Breakers is much more expansive and layered than you'd expect. The twangy lead guitar sews the band together, placing them above most groups parading as folk-based alt-country. Their subdued cover of Buzzkill's "Dog On A Leash" is upbeat in the same way that Ryan Adams can make even the worst heartbreak endearing. Buzzkill, on the other hand, is built not on acoustic melodies and a soulful lead singer but on a solid rock 'n' roll beat anchored by a two-piece horn section. Buzzkill's tone is very much like Interscope Records-era Rocket From The Crypt. While the Buzzkill side is a little bland, Adam John Killip & The Rusty String Breakers save this 7". Bloodshot Records fans, take heed. (GBS)
Blind Bear Records, PO Box 309, Leeds, LS2 7 AH, www.blindbear.co.uk

Afflictions, The - The Peotone EP, CDEP

1960s Milkshakes-style garage rock. Soulful, goofy, and meaningless, The Afflictions' mission is summed up best with their words: "let's make a mess." If The Pattern had a tenor sax player, they might sound like this. (GBS)
Captain Spazz Records, www.captainspazz.com

Against Tomorrow's Sky - Jump The Hedges First, CD

Poppy melodic emo that's jarringly similar to One Time Angels or Crumb's latest manifestation. Poised for radio support and alternative-rock success, Against Tomorrow's Sky's debut boasts ultra-clean production, self-defeating lyrics, and boring, genre-specific clichés. (GBS)
Universal Warning Records, www.universalwarningrecords.com

Aina - Bipartite, CD

At times bouncy and at other times laid-back indie rock, similar to Jawbox. They are most known for their "incredible live performances" in Barcelona, Spain, their home town. (TK)
Superbad Records, PO Box 21313, Washington, DC

20009, www.superbadrecords.com

All The Queen's Men - Curvy Baby, 2xCD

All The Queen's Men are a rock-electronica, genre-bending, gender-bending band. The songs tend to have an ethereal, dream-like quality generally reserved for psychedelia. The second disc contains remixes of the songs from the first disc, most of which are more upbeat than the originals. (AE)
Mad Monarchy Records, PO Box 1258, Boston, MA 02117, www.atqm.com

aLUnARED - SLMZK!, CD

Moody industrial rock with tinges of '80s Goth drama. aLUnARED sounds similar to PIL's darker, *Flowers of Romance* material. SPF 1000 fans might dig this. (GBS)
Action Driver, PO Box 610, Toledo, OH 43697, www.actiondriver.com

Amazing Verticalville, The - S/T, CD

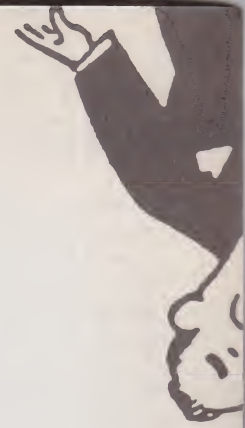
I couldn't decide if I liked this instrumental album, so I asked a Magic 8-Ball. Its response: "Off-kilter drums, fuzzy Moog, and quirky guitar are clever. Samples and sometimes songs themselves go for a smidgen too long. Not 'amazing'—more like 'pretty good but nothing to write home about.'" (AT)
Slide The Needle, 1318 Maryland Drive, Ladson, SC 29456, www.slidetheneedle.com

Antiseen - Eat More Possum, CD

Here it is again, available for the fourth (?) time in all its filth and beauty. This album made me appreciate ANTISEEN in all their glory and understand what this kind of punk rock is about. Fuck that weak shit, get some "possum." Thank you, TKO. (DM)
TKO Records, 3126 W. Cary St. #303, Richmond, VA 23221, www.tkorecords.com

Appleseed Cast, The - Lost Songs, CD

As the title suggests, these are unreleased recordings that have been reworked with additional vocals and guitar. Years ago, I thought this band was lame,



but I like this record. Atmospheric indie rock along the lines of the recent Pedro The Lion and Cave-In records. (PS)

Deep Elm Records, PO Box 36939, Charlotte, NC 28236, www.deepelm.com

As Hope Dies – Birthplace And Burial Site, CD

Orange County metal/hardcore band with a heavy influence from the "Euro-metal style." Sounds like a score to a B-movie thriller. (AA)

Undecided Records, 10695 Lake Oak Way, Boca Raton, FL 33498, www.undecidedrecords.com

♫ Astroglides, The – Fondling With..., CD

This release from Israel is pretty dope. It combines '80s-style thrash punk with a lot of awesome surf guitar, but not usually at the same time. The ratio is like 40 percent punk, 60 percent surf, with a few songs that blend the two styles. The surf tunes are slightly heavier than traditional songs of this style, but they don't shy away from doing the songs justice. The Astroglides even provide a cover of the Ventures' "Dick Tracy" to show how they know how to do it right. The heavier tunes are so good and take me back to my youth, when I was all about SNFU, DRI and Christ On A Crutch. It really shocks me when bands get that sound down; I was under the impression it couldn't be reproduced anymore due to overproduction or lack of ability. All the lyrics are in Hebrew, but a literal translation is provided. Song content includes an insightful anti-Nazi song ("Be Meine Hitler"), the poor conditions of hospitals/nursing homes, and how bad nu metal is ("Hardkorn"). Actually, they show their limitations when trying to reproduce Korn's style. Regardless, this is worth looking into. (DM) Fast Music, PO Box 14542, Tel Aviv 61144, Israel, www.fastmusic.co.il

Aztec Two Step – S/T, 7"

I'd write a featured review of this amazing Swedish power-violence EP, but I can't find out much about it. This is one of those miracle records that comes from out of nowhere and becomes an instant classic. Run out and get this 11-song EP if you like fast, growl-free hardcore. (AE)

Immigrant Sun Records, PO Box 150711, Brooklyn, NY 11215, www.immigrantsun.com

B-Movie Rats – Rock 'N' Roll Queen, 10"

Another one of the southern-rock-influenced rock 'n' roll bands that captures the essence of the style. Long hair, lots of guitar solos and snotty vocals are all found in abundance on this thick piece of plastic that fans of Antiseen and Electric Frankenstein will enjoy. (BN)

R3 Records, Diesterestraat 6, 3290 Molenstede-Diest, Belgium

Beat Crusaders – Howling Symphony Of, CD

Six poppy songs, the kind that sound like they could be the themes to nostalgic teen TV shows. They have that '50s feel, like Weezer and synthesizers. (DAL) SquidvsWhale, 5524 N. Moore Ave, Portland, OR 97217, www.squidvswhale.com

Beauty To Ashes – Reproduce The Common Practice, CD

Beauty To Ashes utilizes nearly every punk subgenre imaginable, and sometimes they even do it well. I could live without the Misfits cover and Refused-inspired electronic breaks, but there are some nice metal guitar parts throughout that make me forget the excess. (PS) Pluto Records, PO Box 1201, McKinney, TX 75070, www.plutorecords.com

Bedford Drive – The Last Time I Saw The Stars, CD

Happy, upbeat pop-rock the way it was meant to be played. Lots of male/female vocal harmonies. Although they list Weezer, The Foo Fighters, and '80s Metallica among their influences, I didn't hear that in the music. The band is still worthy of recognition, though. (TK)

Vertical Verve Records, PO Box 2097, Riverview, MI 48192, www.verticalverve.com

Behind The Sun – Broken Hearts And Shattered Bones, CD

This industrial emo/metalcore combines an abrasive, blistering sonic attack with sensitive, angry-boy lyrics. The singer's harsh vocals sound like he's gargling, and his angry growls are counterposed with a searching, vulnerable male voice. Bass-driven, this record has wide tempo changes with macho guitar soloing and posturing, plus post-break-up soul-searching. (JS)

Too Damn Hype, PO Box 63524, Philadelphia, PA 19147, www.toodamnhype.com

♫ Biafra, Jello – Machine Gun In The Clown's Hand, 3xCD

Even pushing our word-count limits for reviews, it's hard to analyze the avalanche of information on these three CDs—I have five pages of notes. This is Jello's seventh spoken-word record, the first I've heard. If ever the world needed Jello Biafra, it's now, but I'm just as skeptical of leftist loudmouths as I am their counterparts on the right. Disc one (73:21), disc two (70:47) and disc three (46:46) are full of analysis of the war on terrorism, the Bush administration, the election of 2000 and all the usual targets. He's downright gleeful in his disparagement of all of them, but I found Jello both enlightening and humane. He's dead-on with his

ABOUT OUR REVIEWS: We make every attempt to review all the records we receive, as long as they are released on independent record labels. However, despite our best efforts, not every record ends up in here for a myriad of reasons. Records marked with a little ear (♫) are designated as "highlight" reviews by the reviewer. That means it's a record that really stands out for them this time around, but just because a review doesn't have an ear doesn't mean it isn't good. Finally, if a reviewer doesn't like your record, it's just one person's opinion, so don't freak out. We're sure you put a good deal of work into your project and that alone is worth some congratulations!



assertions that the war on terrorism is unwinnable, that two of Bin Laden's demands are logical (pulling out of Saudi Arabia, easing Iraqi sanctions) and that Gore attempted to kill the Kyoto Treaty himself. Jello's warning against "radical fundamentalism," that holier-than-thou air of infallibility shared by zealots on the right and left, was music to my ears. I practically rejoiced when he gave *realistic* suggestions for dissent and said that not everyone who waves the flag is a moron. But not all of it was good. For instance, he overstated UPS's lawsuit against the Canadian government under NAFTA because Canada's postal system competes with UPS. Actually, UPS says Canada's *express delivery* service is unfair because it profits from the postal service's monopoly. A shaky case, no doubt, but Jello simplifies it too much. He mentions two things that have *proven* to be urban legends: 1) the footage CNN used of celebrating Palestinians on 9/11 was from 1991; 2) the government told people to stay inside on Halloween 2001 because terrorists were going to attack malls. Jello's astute enough to distance himself from these assertions, but he hasn't done his research. Another problem is his overestimation of the child deaths caused by UN sanctions against Iraq. The 1-million-plus figure people use so much is vastly inflated, and I'd expect him to see through his own side's propaganda, too. He also mentions his "first exposure" to President Bush was when Bush accepted the GOP's presidential nomination. Huh? How is it Jello "Mr. Politics" Biafra hadn't seen GW before then? Curious, no? Well, to summarize, Jello offers a lot of food for thought on these CDs—just watch what you eat. (KR) Alternative Tentacles, PO Box 419092, San Francisco, CA 94141-9092, www.alternativetentacles.com

Billy Syndrome – Between, CDR

A one man band without much humor or music to the songs, Billy Syndrome uses lots of fucked up sounds and keyboards. CDRs have made it way too easy to "release" your own records these days. (EA) Slutfish Records, 327 Bedford. #a2, Brooklyn, NY 11211

Bitter Life Typecast, The – S/T, CD

So one of the vocalists on this intense disc sounds like Robert Smith of The Cure being grabbed in the balls. Eleven self-recorded/produced emo and

rock style tunes (with some of the best drumming I have heard in a long time) that challenge the listener in a good way. (BC) Self-released, thebitterlifetypecast@hotmail.com

Black Dice – Lost Valley, CDEP

A co-worker of mine at the Empty Bottle said Black Dice was the loudest band he ever heard. Note: Loud doesn't necessarily mean *good*. Two songs are on this 3-inch CD, one 12 minutes, the other nine, neither worth the time. Noisy, amelodic, arhythmic wankery. (KR) Tigerbeat 6, www.tigerbeat6.com

Black Sky – Giving Up The Ghost, CD

How many bands have you heard try to sound like Social Distortion or the pop band favorite of the week? Black Sky does both, and unlike a million of crappy opening bands, they do it well enough that I listened to this twice—and will again. (EA) Giant Squid, PO Box 8154, Riverside, CA 92515

Black Sea, The – S/T, CDEP

Fugazi bassist Joe Lally joins Frodus members Jason Hamacher (drums) and Shelby Circus (lead singer/guitarist) on this three-song debut. "Wingless Fire" is haunting and beautiful with spooky, wispy male vocals and trebly, electrified acoustic guitar. The lyrics stand on their own. (JS) Lovitt, PO Box 248, Arlington, VA 22210, lovitt.com

Black Snakes, The – Good Driving Music, CD

Lets see, you pick up a CD, and it has four songs, including "Jail Bitch" and "Up In Flames," demolition derby cover art. Sometimes this reviewing gig can be so easy. It's kickass New York rock 'n' roll, baby! (BC) Self-released, www.theblacksnakes.com

Blinding Light, The – Glass Bullet, CD

At times it's reminiscent of sped-up Ozzy a la Randy Rhodes' cheesy hair-band guitar antics; other times it sounds like a rawer version of Megadeth. More metal than your silverware collection. (AA) Deathwish, Inc., 10 Lothrop St., Beverly MA 01915, www.deathwishinc.com

♫ Blood Brothers, The – March On Electric Children, CD

The Blood Brothers is one of those bands that hit it big when the whole "Spock-Rock-White-Belt-Scream" mess was the hot shit in punk rock. (What, was that like a year ago now?) The kids seem to go apeshit for this sort of discordant, artsy, scream-

filled rock 'n' roll, and I'm no exception. As much as you may want to hate this sort of band, The Blood Brothers are one of the few who have truly inventive and original qualities. This record is somewhat of a concept album, about what I can't really tell, but there is definitely a strange storyline. The songs are all done in true Blood Brothers style: fast, frantic, constantly changing time signatures, hardcore noise next to artfully worked (dare I say *avant garde*?) breakdowns, lots of sexual overtones in the lyrics, and their characteristic dual vocals (one guy screams, one guy brings the attitude-filled sassiness). You'll fall into a mass of slow-moving, swirling whispers only to be jerked back up by a staccato, screaming frenzy. Call me crazy, but when you strip down all of the noise and yelps, this could possibly sound a whole lot like Nick Drake. Hmmm. (MG) Three One G, PO Box 178262, San Diego, CA 92177, www.threeoneg.com

Blow Up Hollywood – S/T, CD

Somewhat trippy, somewhat creepy music with lots of spiritual themes. Mellow guitar, pianos, orchestral sounds and electronic music with somber, soulful vocals. It seems like this guy has had a drug-induced religious experience at some point. I think a vow of silence is your next move, man. (NS) Self-released, www.blowuphollywood.com

Blue Sky Goodbye – The Identity EP, CDEP

There is a local pop band that sounds exactly like Blue Sky Goodbye in my home town, and I'm sure there's one in yours as well. Upfront vocals, ringing chords, sentimental breakdown parts where the guitar drops out. The four songs contain a lot of "I's" and "You's." (EA) Uprising Records, PO Box 42259, Philadelphia, PA 19104, www.uprisingrecords.com

Blue Universe Trio – NYC Free Jazz, CD

Well, the title says it all. Don't go into this expecting Decide—or Miles Davis or Jelly Roll Morton for that matter. Squawky, frenetic jazz interspaced between more mellow tracks. Fans of free jazz will like this. Everyone else will say, "Next, please." (KR) Future Recordings, www.blueuniverse.tigerasylum.org

Bluebird – Hot Blood, CD

Y'know, sometimes it's nice to find a rock band that doesn't need a flurry of superfluous adjectives to describe it. Bluebird are energetic and catchy in

Reviewer Spotlight: Eric Action (EA)

Urinals, *Another EP*. "Ack, Ack, Ack, Ack," screamed D. Boon as I spun my Minutemen record in high school and read the liner notes. That cover song intrigued me, and I wanted to learn more about the Urinals. Listening to a Descendents record, I heard a line, "we spit on Urinals," referring to the band again. Finally I found some bootleg versions of their first two singles, originally released in 1979. It excited me, and I want to give you the treasure of their second single, *Another EP*. The first track, "Black Holes," has their patented thump-thump beat, but it's rather tame compared to the next couple tracks. "I'm White and Middle Class" is an out-of-control anthem of punk and indie rockers that pegs down 99 percent of *Punk Planet's* readers. The flipside introduces us to "I'm a Bug," which I think is their best track and has been covered numerous times. "I'm a bug / DDT in my breakfast / along with tea yeah / buzz buzz buzz buzz buzz / baby, I'm a bug / I gotta stinger / you got one too baby / let's wing it"—a classic love song. Finally, the cover that got me interested, "Ack, Ack, Ack, Ack," with its one minute of army-marching rhythm. You owe it to yourself to order the Urinals' *Negative Capability* retrospective CD on Amphetamine Reptile. It contains the first three singles, comp tracks and live stuff, including some songs that would later get released as *100 Flowers*. If you dig the later songs, I also highly recommend *100 Flowers*, because most of the vinyl will be really hard to find—unless you want to come over and listen to them at my house.

Best two releases of 2002 were Against Me's *Reinventing Axl Rose* and Epoxies' *Epoxies*. Other than that I really have been diggin' all of In The Red Records releases.

that Foo Fighters sort of way, but their occasional forays into psych rock (plus an appearance by Wayne Kramer) make them a bit different. (AT) Dim Mak Records, PO Box 14041, Santa Barbara, CA, www.dimmak.com

Blueprint – Bela Lugosi, CD

Looonnggg, noisy songs with vocals yelled in Italian. Track one clocks in at 7:39, so don't expect instant gratification. Well, or gratification, really. This definitely has its moments of excellent D.C.-style postpunk, but glacial pacing gets old. (KR) Alice International, Via Campana 7, 10125 Torino, Italy, www.lovelyalice.com

Boss Martians – Making The Rounds, CD

Retro garage rock that blends punk and power pop sensibilities. Although this is nothing that will stand the test of time based on originality, there are a couple of gems on here, like the song "Put Some Hurt On You," a blazingly fast, organ-backed ode to lost love and revenge. (MG) MuSick Recordings, PO Box 1757, Burbank, CA 91507, www.musicrecords.com

Botch – An Anthology Of Dead Ends, CD

Metallic noise-core from the recently deceased Botch. Six tracks rise from the dead with enough demonic energy to make George Romero shit himself. These intricate, heavy, and explosive final tracks prove Botch will never Rest In Peace. (JG) Hydra Head Records, PO Box 990248, Boston, MA 02199, www.hydrahead.com

Bottomline – In And Out Of Luck, CD

This is upbeat pop punk with major emo leanings. These guys are great at what they do, but unfortunately, their sound is way overdone as of late. If infectious emotional rock (such as Jimmy Eat World) or Blink-182 poppiness is your thing, check out this band. (MG) Nice Guy Records, PO Box 42815, Cincinnati, OH 45242-0815, www.niceguyrecords.com

Boxes, The – S/T, CDEP

New York City's The Boxes self-released their all-girl retro rock 'n' roll debut before it got picked up by Dopamine/Amalgate Records. This seductive punk rocking power pop with engaging melodies combines the sweet and pretty girliness of the Go Go's mixed with the angrier, sharper edge of those baaad teenage jailbaiters, The Runaways. The femme four-top takes their cues from today's

strong, self-actualized lady rockers like Joan Jett and Sleater-Kinney. Against churning guitars, the lyrics range from simple and yearning ("Hold me / Hold me tight! / Hold me / Hold me right") to downright hilarious, as with the amusingly titled "Boyz N' Camaros" and "Rich Kid": "You're a rich kid / I'm not / You still think it's cool / To grow your own pot / Go home!" Check out these baaad little foxy boxes. (JS) The Dopamine/Amalgate Family, PO Box 3221, Beverly, MA 01915, www.dopamine-records.com

Brainless Wonders, The – Ployd Lumstead, CD

This is a high-energy, sincere pop-punk CD in the Queers vein, with song titles like "My Mom's Boyfriend," "Psycho Over You," and "Drunk Driving." Funny and refreshing, this release harkens back to the days before Green Day signed, and even the toughest of punks were enamored with pop. (AE) Average Day Productions, PO Box 20217, Worcester, MA 01602, www.brainlesswonders.com

Braves, The – That's The Hot Part, CD

A nice full-length debut from this dream pop quintet out of Rockford, Ill. Joseph Reina's yearning male vocals have a hazy, ghostly effect, as if recorded through a screen or filter. The trebly electrified acoustic guitar is pretty on "Young Loves." (JS) Arms Reach Recordings, 1220 W. Hood Apt. #1, Chicago, IL 60660, www.armsreachrecords.com

Caligari – S/T, CD

The inventive beginning of the first song excited me, but my excitement quickly wore out when the generic, crunchy guitars started up, and the singer started screaming incoherently. Caligari sounds like a less interesting early Cave-In. Double kick drums just don't work if the music is midtempo rip-off garbage. (TK) INIT Records, PO Box 3432, Mankato, MN 56002, www.initrecords.net

Capital City – Am I Invisible, CD

Crystal clear, pristine pop songs with excellent production and male/female vocals. This would fit nicely into any college-radio format, and it's worth it alone for the superior downer chords of "Drift Away" and the echoey slide guitar on "Receiving". (AS) Near By Music, PO Box 441448, Somerville, MA 02144, www.nearbymusic.com

Chalet Chalet – S/T, CDEP

Chalet Chalet play a rockin' mix of noisy, messy garage rock, sort of like the (International) Noise Conspiracy without the organs or obnoxious preaching. It's the type of music that big, clueless magazines are referencing when they say "rock is back." It never went away, so let's dance. (KR) Walk In Cold Records, 8408 Lakeside Drive, Downers Grove, IL 60516, www.walkincoldrecords.com

Chandler – Tattoo Fire Horses, 7"

Slow and slightly mathy rock out of Germany. You get three songs full of odd time signatures, discordant guitar and bass work, and spoken vocals. Screams "art" from every angle and sounds way too much like, though not nearly as good as, Shellac. (MG) Chandler Entertainment Group/Kopist-Platten, www.kopist-platten.de

Channel 3 – CH3, CD

We all remember Channels 3's *Fear Of Life* from 1982, and CH3 picks up where it left off. This is the SoCal sound at its best; you really won't be disappointed. I expected this to really suck, as most comeback records do. Now my fists are in the air, and I am skanking in the pit (proverbially). (EA) Dr. Strange Records, PO Box 1058 Alta Loma, CA 90701, www.drstrange.com

Chatham – Something Fell, CD

If Death Cab For Cutie got drunk, or if SST-era Dinosaur Jr. had to turn the volume down because the weird old lady across the street was banging on the garage door, you would have this. They call themselves "lazy core," and despite being jokesters, it's solid music to take seriously. (DAL) Vertical Verve Records, PO Box 2097, Riverview, MI 48192, www.verticalverve.com

Chomsky, Noam – The New War On Terrorism: Fact And Fiction, CD

The latest from Chomsky is actually a quick lesson on U.S. involvement in global terrorism, specifically underlining CIA ties to the Russian/Afghani conflict, rather than an assessment of Operation Enduring Freedom and the "War on Terrorism." Recorded a month after 9/11 and weeks before the Afghanistan bombing campaign began, this lecture at MIT was simply too early for the leading linguistics scholar to dissect the "War on Terrorism." Nonetheless, in typical Chomsky style, knowledge is dropped like a bomb. In 1987, both the United States and Israel vetoed a UN

Reviewer Spotlight: Amy Adoyzie (AA)

Mr. T Experience, *Love Is Dead*. I yearn for the days long-gone when all that occupied my mind was the impracticality of high-school algebra and whether boys noticed me dancing in the front during that punk show. The only way to recapture that innocence is to listen to the records that scored my painfully cliché teenage geek-punk existence. In my case, the record that epitomizes that time is The Mr. T Experience's *Love Is Dead*. I revisit those days without the inherent feelings of inadequacy and insecurity that go along with being a teenager; now I can drown those same sentiments with legally acquired alcohol and that good ol' Berkeley pop-punk standby. The music is simple, but the lyrics keep your ears perked and eyes wide. It's comforting to know that any time I need a dose of Dr. Frank's remarkably witty ("The Future Ain't What It Used To Be," "I'm Like Yeah, But She's All No"), hopeful ("Ba Ba Ba Ba," "Thank You (For Not Being One of Them)"), and equally depressing ("Deep Deep Down") lyrics of love lost, love found (and then lost again) that I can just pop in this one record. His songs are like an old quilt that you cuddle up with on a dateless Friday night. God knows there are plenty of 'em.

You betta check up from the neck up: Black Star, *Mos Def & Talib Kweli are Black Star*; The Breeders, *Title TK*; The Influent, *Check Please*; Har Mar Superstar, *S/T*; Superdrag *Last Call for Vitriol*.



resolution against terrorism on the grounds of a clause that excluded labeling resistance against racist governments and colonialism (i.e. the African National Congress) as terrorist activity. Chomsky also brings up how the U.S. failed to extradite a Haitian war criminal. The 54-minute lecture concludes on a high note, citing positive changes in the mainstream press in understanding the root causes of anti-Yankee sentiment in the Middle East and the possibility for the government to rethink its foreign policy. Sadly, the recording feels dated amid current discussions of an Iraqi invasion and militarism's blatant replacement of foreign diplomacy. (GBS)

AK Press, 674-A 23rd St., Oakland, CA 94612-1163, www.akuk.com; Alternative Tentacles Press, PO Box 419092, San Francisco, CA 94141-9092, www.alternativetentacles.com

♫ Christiana – Fatigue Kills, CD

Nostalgic yet proggy, intellectual yet psychedelic, this gypsy garage pop rocks through most of its 12 songs, hinting at the deep, dark, cabalistic charisma of Thirteenth Floor Elevators. Besides retro and dreamy stylings, fuzzed out guitars and tempo changes, the Toronto four-piece toys with interesting atonal layering and intros. Andrew McAllister's smooth, pretty vocals sound a touch like Pinback. The mysterious song titles leave you questioning: "Conflict Is An Antidote" (Why?), "I Cannot Share Your Point of View" (Whose?), "Introduce the Subplot First" (To what narrative?), and the catchy "Embarrassing Virus" (Is it herpes?). Neato '60s boyfriend-girlfriend cover art wraps up the package. An enigmatic debut with its own cool sound. (JS) High School Champion, PO Box 86003, 670 Bloor St. W., Toronto ON M6G 1L0, Canada, www.highschoolchampion.com

♫ Cocknoose - Badmen, Butchers, and Bleeders, CD

Cocknoose is one of the better-known Confederacy of Scum bands, but these early recordings were becoming really hard to find until TKO released this CD/LP. Hailing from the college town of Lawrence, Kan., (technically north of the Mason-Dixon line), Cocknoose is yet another country-punk amalgam machine. Some of the band's seminal hits like "Punk Rock Outlaws," "American Boys," and "Death Noose" are included here, and they've never sounded sharper. The CD version

contains three bonus cover songs: "Cherry Bomb," "I Wanna Fuck Myself," and "Dog Shit." The GG covers are to be expected, but considering the nature of this band, the Joan Jett cover is a real surprise treat. In addition to the listed covers, there are multiple hidden bonus tracks, including alternate versions and more covers. Judgmental P.C. types won't get Cocknoose's deep batter humor, but those less worried about fashion and more in tune with embracing a range of music will love their genre-bending and lightheartedness. This would make a great Valentine's Day present for the scum rocker in your life. Something is very wrong in punk land when a band this dazzling can't afford to tour. (AE) TKO Records, 3216 W. Cary St. #303, Richmond, VA 23221, www.tkorecords.com

♫ Coldbluesy – Black Sevens And Suicide Kings, CDEP

This is an interesting CD. The music is like a slowed-down style of hardcore, but there's so much melody that I can't help making a Hot Water Music comparison. Lots of start-stops, time changes, guitar-driven buildups, and Fugazi-esque fills add some complexity to the music, and the gruff, shouted vocals add a rough edge. The lyrics are personal, yet incredibly clever and insightful, which is a welcome break from the typical love/lost-love song fare. I'd suggest this to anyone who likes the more melodic side of heavy/loud music (Hot Water Music, Avail, etc.). Good stuff. (MG) Self-released, 8332 Kipling Ave., Woodbridge ON, L4L 2A8, Canada, www.coldbluesky.com

Come On – Disneyland, CDR

This is collection of remastered demo tracks from this late-1970s NYC punk band. The music is somewhat minimalistic, yet still has personality and a lot of drive. It's reminiscent of early Talking Heads and the art sound coming out of NYC at that time. (DM) Heliocentric, 69 Cooper Square, #1144, New York, NY 10003, www.heliocd.com

Compulsions, The - S/T, CD

If the self-proclaimed classification of "atomic-emo-groove-core" scares you, then actually listening will make you shit your pants. They're fakin' the funk here. Feel free to throw this against the fucking wall. (JC)

Self-released, www.thecompulsions.com

Closet Monster – Killed the Radio Star, CD

Someone grew up on NOFX and later Blink-182, then got pissed off enough to yell and scream, in harmony, over some pop guitars. It's unfair to compare, so let it be known that this disc will appeal to anyone under 21 for sure. The snobby crowd will dismiss this as another _____-ripoff band. (EA) Underground Operations PO Box 13 Ajax, Ontario, L1S 3C2, Canada, www.undergroundoperations.com

Cress – The Greed Machine And The Money Tree, 2x12"

Lots of songs and even a free poster (which says "AND JESUS WEPT" in huge letters). Standard straight-ahead punk in a '77 or early-'80s vein with politically charged lyrics. Cheesy and dramatic at times, especially during an endless clunker of a song on side A. (KR)

Skuld, Malmshöjersstr 14, 71272 Renningen, Germany

Cro(w)s – Dirty Bunny, CD

Straight-ahead rock 'n' roll with driving guitars and sing-songy choruses. Really separated recording where you can make out every instrument. Sometimes we need some R&R and T&A, don't we? (EA) Crows and Pawns, www.crowsandpawns.com

Cuspidor – The Keys to Quezaltenango, CD

An intimate, acoustic musical in 17 tracks from this Portland group about two men who travel to Quezaltenango. One is a living lecher and the other a dead fugitive, and they encounter strange characters, perpetual spring, and one another. (DAL) Lelp Recordings, PO Box 7044, Portland, OR 97207, www.lelprecordings.com

Damnation – The Unholy Sounds Of, CD

Horror-themed punk 'n' roll with an unusual amount of pop elements. These guys really want to be the Misfits of the 21st century. Although Misfits comparisons would be fitting, no band could ever pull such a feat—especially this one. (MG) R.A.F.R. Records, 11054 Ventura Blvd., #205, Studio City, CA 91604, www.rafr.com

Dan Melchior's Broke Revue – Bitterness, Spite, Rage, and Scorn, CD

Mostly midtempo garage-rock stuff with cool, slightly distorted, vocals. Very interesting stuff and some cool cover art. (BC)

In The Red, 1118 W. Magnolia, PO Box 208,

Reviewer Spotlight: Vincent Chung (VC)

Deadguy, *Fixation On A Co-worker*. The mid-'90s had peaked as American hardcore entered another period of suburban stagnation. Earth Crisis became a parodied relic—compared to the rotting dead horse they are now. Kids had no urgent political issue to rally around, so they threw temper tantrums behind Reversal Of Man and Frail. The Texas Is The Reason/Promise Ring split was a mere blip, but foreshadowed a direction to come. The Internet's accessibility and economic prosperity padded punk's potency with the popularity of art over emotion while diluting it with "emo." Riot Grrl fell from media attention and suffered from internal infighting. Then Deadguy took a shit in the corner and created the foulest stink. Coming off the buzz from the *Work Ethic 7*" and an ex-Rorschach/ex-No Escape tag, *Fixation On A Co-worker* landed in my hands. As soon as the needle hit the wax, someone grabbed the back of my head and smashed it against the concrete. For about 45 minutes, my brains were rubbed into the cement with a frenzied grind. Deadguy superceded formula (e-chord chugs, festcore politics, and the token animal-rights track) by exhibiting Black Flag's trademark anger. Keith Huckin's raw riffs mixed with Tim Singer's harrowing voice was one of the most brutal combinations of its time. It didn't matter what the lyrics were about (girls); their music still made me want to destroy the world. Deadguy put my faith back into hardcore and then followed up with the best sellout story in history.

"Honey, that's MY JAM!": Deerhoof, *Reveille*; Black Eyes 7"; Oil, *Definition: Delta*; The Black Heart Procession, *Amore Del Tropic*; French Toast, *Bugman* CDEP; The New Pornographers, *Mass Romantic*.

Burbank, CA 91506, www.intheredrecords.com

Daycare Swindlers – Heathen Radio, CD

Not just another Bad Religion/Circle Jerks rip-off band, these guys have an edge over their copycat peers 'cause they don't just sing about lovelorn high-school angst. There's actual substance, which is a rarity nowadays. (AA)

Go-Kart Records, PO Box 20, Prince St. Station, New York, NY 10012, www.gokartrecords.com

Dead Pop Club - Autopilot Off, CD

French pop-punkers shine with slight SoCal flavor. So endearing that you want to pinch their cheeks and then punch their guts for contributing to the Weezer-influenced emo quagmire. But how can you hate a band who namechecks Hüsker Dü, Daniel Clowes, and sings a Joey Ramone love song? (VC) Diabolik Records, BP4, 94111 Arcueil CDX, France, www.deadpopclub.com

Deadcats, The – Bad Pussy, CD

These guys claim to be rockabilly, psychobilly, punk and surf. It's mostly derivative, with a flat recording that makes the guitars seem distanced from the rest of the music. It's not bad; The Deadcats are close to pulling it off ("Lost Generation Breakdown," "Police On My Back"), but not quite there. (KR) Flying Saucer Records, #7, 4425 Halifax St., Burnaby, BC, V5C6P2, Canada

Dearly Departed - The Remains Of Maryanne Mayweather, CDEP

Emo along the same lines as Elliott and Sunny Day Real Estate. This doesn't venture far off the beaten path. The singer's voice is a perfect fit, though, and the quiet/loud dynamic is used sparingly. It's certainly a consistent release, but there's nothing here you haven't heard before. (PS)

One Day Savior Recordings, PO Box 372 Willston Park, NY 11596, www.onedaysavior.com

Deadweight – Half Wit Anthems, CD

This electrified, violin, cello, and drums trio has original sound textures by way of their instrument choices, but they end up being too close to Primus for my liking. But, wow, you really don't notice the guitars' absence. (AS) Nuttsactor 5, PO Box 170421, San Francisco, CA 94117

Del Cielo / Sin Desires Marie – split, 7"

Two bands with distinct sounds come together to craft a strong split 7". Sin Desires Marie's side streams haunted, layered, fleeting Sleater-Kinney-esque vocals over bass-heavy instrumentation that

sounds like morbid emo funk. Del Cielo is less experimental, turning in a solidly wistful song about Richmond. (DAL)

Ed Walters, Del Cielo, PO Box 297 College Park, MD 20741-0297, www.exoticfever.com/delcieloe

¶ Demon Hunter – S/T, CD

Menacing and dense, this bass-driven punk/metal assault can make you see spiders on the ceiling without tripping—not surprising, as the Seattle band's impressive (and scary) debut was recorded and engineered at "The Black Dungeon" and mastered at "Spectre North." Songs are ominously titled, such as "Screams Of The Undead," "Infected," "My Throat Is An Open Grave," "A Broken Upper Hand" and "The Gauntlet." It's an odd and interesting mix of sludgy, portentous hardcore with Rumpelstiltskin-like vocals (e.g., fierce grumbling from the low registers of the male throat) combined with proggy party rock. An album of contrasts, it has idealistic, melodic passages with Prince Charming vocals, as if in dialogue. With cello and programming, the album explores "the perpetual frustration of spiritual and personal inadequacy" and is meant to be a "glimmer of hope for an age of contrived power-balls." Rather fun for gothy types, and in its hokey Dungeons-and-Dragons way, smart. (JS) Solid State Records, PO Box 12698, Seattle, WA 98111, www.solidstaterecords.com

Demonics, The - Ritual On The Beach, CD

The cheesy layout with demon titty chicks and bloody band members kept my expectations low, but my ears heard a different story. Surf-inspired power pop that works best when not weighed down with the demon gimmick. Perhaps live it works, but on record it's their hooks that keep my interest. (PS) Coldfront Records, PO Box 8345 Berkeley CA 94707, www.coldfrontrecords.com

Desert City Soundtrack – Contents of Distraction, CD

Desert City Soundtrack want their songs to be grandiose, sweeping arias that express a nostalgia not quite adequately evoked by a thousand bands that have come before. Musically stunning and diverse (piano adds rolling depth to songs like "Foglifter"), the effort, however valiant, is marred by overwrought lyrics and vocals. (JD) Deep Elm Records, PO Box 36939, Charlotte, NC 28236, www.deepelm.com

¶ DFI – S/T, CD

In all the time I lived in Chicago, I'd never known of DFI. Thankfully this record found its way into my hands. DFI is a one-man band who wields a mighty ax and sequencer to create a diverse record that's all fun. Comparisons are sure to be drawn to Atom & His Package, due to the record's quirkiness, and to The Fucking Champs for coming off as ironic metal, but these comparisons don't do DFI justice. More appropriately, it's as if your weird friend with the massive record collection promised to make a mixtape of his favorite music, only opting instead to create everything himself. To a point, that's pretty accurate, as this CD compiles a few tracks from DFI's out-of-print records. And this CD effortlessly shifts from electro-punk to metal to car-commercial jingles and just about every genre I can imagine. Song titles like "The Dudes Are Stoked" and "Sensitive Emo Stalker" had me smiling as they fit their songs so well. At first listen, this record may come across as novelty, but it stayed in my CD player since the day I got it, and it will remain there for a long while. (PS)

Honey Bear Records, 1730 E. Olton, #135, Austin, TX 78741, www.hbrerecords.org

¶ DOA – Hardcore '81, CD

This classic piece of punk-rock history catches DOA during one of their finest hours. More than 20 years after its original release, this is still so much better than most current punk bands. With their hard guitars and well-placed solos, monster rhythm section, snarled vocals and flowing songs, DOA captured the classic punk sound. Helping set the standard of "hardcore," *Hardcore '81* is in your face with a political agenda, encouraging the listener to "think for yourself, not to back down, change the world and to be free" (Joey Shithead Keithley). The combination of an aggro sound and melody makes this a necessity to own. Along with the original 14 tracks, you also get the bonus EP of *Don't Turn Yer Back, John Peel Session* from 1984. Do yourself a favor: Get this fucking record now with any other early DOA. You will not regret it. (DM) Sudden Death Records, Cascades PO Box 43001, Burnaby, BC Canada V56 3H0, www.suddendeath.com

DOA – Win the Battle, CD

Canada's most famous punks are back with a strong record that shows off their greatest gift: the ability to mix earnest politics with goofy humor seamless-

Reviewer Spotlight: Brian Czarnik (BC)

Slammin' Watusis, *Slammin' Watusis*. Warning: This record will kick your ass! If you had to describe this fine piece of vinyl in one word, it would be, "kick ass rock 'n' roll." I am talking about Slammin' Watusis' self-titled record on Epic/CBS records from 1988. Never has a band with guitars and sax and drums sounded so intense and powerful. Just listen to songs like "Won't Sell Out," "King Of Cha-Cha," and "Run Too Fast." You'll thank me later. Even though I never saw this band live, and another record of theirs I bought wasn't as good, there is something about this record that simply will rock you like there is no tomorrow. If I were stranded on a desert island that had a turntable, beer, electric power and some nachos, this is the record I would want to listen to. The guitar solos and sax solos are top-notch; they burn into you like a buzz-saw blade. The 13 songs keep going and going, their intensity never relenting. This is one record that any fan of rock or punk should own! Go to the local used record store or search on eBay for this gem. Damn, this is a great record. DAMN!

Five best bands this time: The Dubnicks, Skool's Out, Life of Pi, The Bitter Life Typecast, and Whore Daddy-o's.



ly. Their hardcore sound of old has grown into a less fearsome, more rollicking barroom pop, but the old convictions remain. (DAL)
Sudden Death Records, Moscrop PO Box 43001,
Burnaby, BC V56 3H0 Canada,
www.suddendeath.com

Don't Look Down – Start The Show, CD

Yet another band I've never heard of that sounds just like a few bands that I've heard *too much* of. Don't Look Down play polished melodic emo-pop inspired by Jimmy Eat World and the likes. More hooks, harmonizing and heartbreak for y'all. (MG)
Iguana Records, 110 Greene St., #702, New York, NY 10012, www.iguanarecords.com

Downtown Brown – Moist & Ridiculous, CD

Decent high-energy metal, funk and punk with a sense of humor. None of it's enough to keep me interested. They're probably huge in the Detroit area, but nowhere else. I could do without the Rage ATM track with the vocalist doing the weird guitar parts. (DM)
Static Records, 17215 Mack Ave., Detroit, MI 48224, www.staticrecords.com

9 Dubnicks, The – Rejection Builds Character, CD

This is exactly why rock, mostly punk rock, is cool for us losers. Even though it's again corporate and commercial, and we're stuck with a lot of pretty-boy Warped-tour-type junk, the real rockers are still out there. These three lads play their asses off and rock out like it's supposed to be done! Straight-ahead rock with soaring guitars and catchy vocals provided by guys who didn't get the prom queen pregnant or play on the football team. Music made by and for the less fortunate—*Rejection Builds Character* is exactly right. After all the cute girls reject you, you then go home, write songs, form a great band, and play your ass off. This is how it is done. All seven tunes are fantastic power pop/punk, and this is very refreshing stuff. Now all you pretty boy MTV/Warped Tour sheep go fuck yourselves, listen to your crap, and leave the good stuff for us who venture out to the VFW halls and college campuses to see great bands like this. (And no, I still haven't gone to a damn prom, and I am pissed!) (BC)
Self-released, www.thedubnicks.com

East Arcadia – We Only See From Where We Stand, CD

Busy musicians set the tone for some energetic, nearly hardcore, pop punk with vocals and lyrics mining the tortured human soul. (AS)

Reviewer Spotlight: Art Ettinger (AE)

FYP, *Dance My Duncie*. I was going to write in defense of record stores carrying hate rock, but no one involved in punk really gives a fuck about free speech anyway, so I'm writing about FYP's classic album, *Dance My Duncie*. When released in 1993, it was a breath of fresh air in an era dominated by regimented sounds. Sloppy, poppy, fast, and catchy as hell, this second LP from FYP contains spastic classics like "Vacation Bible School," "2000 A.D.," and "Fuck You And A Half." The band brought a juvenile sense of kiddy power into their sound, and they sang about important themes like school lunches and ding-dong ditching. *Dance My Duncie* is still in print on vinyl and CD from Recess Records. Subsequent to this classic album, FYP suffered from inconsistency, horrendous live shows, and the suicide of one of its members. Believe it or not, the only other really good full-length is their swan song, *Toys That Kill*, which came out in 2000 and blows away all their later work. FYP fans will also want to check out the band Toys That Kill, who put on the great live show FYP was never capable of.

It's been a slow month for anything besides review records, so I've been grooving to: old MRR Radio tapes; Heroin's *Paper Bag 7*"; numerous ANTISEEN reissues; and anything by The Steve McQueens. I've also been watching so many Coffin Joe movies that I'm starting to act like him.

Geykido Comet Records, PO Box 3743, Laguna Hills, CA 92654, www.gcrecords.com

Electric Frankenstein – Listen Up, Baby!, CD

Reissued version of this album, now with 13 songs. Tough punk rock (emphasis on *rock*) with attitude, guitar solos and gasoline-soaked vocals. These guys will kick your ass, then buy you a beer. Think AC/DC, Dead Boys or later Poison Idea, only less filling. (NS)
TKO, 3126 W. Cary St., #303, Richmond, VA 23221, www.tkorecords.com

EMPI / BillyBoy E La Sua Banda – split, CD

EMPI are Japan's "best kept secret" of oi, and BillyBoy hail from Italy and wear the shitkickers, too. They both sound similar, with the anthemic choruses and gruff vocals, but it doesn't make me want to lace up the boots, though. (JG)
Brutus Records, Claudine Brutus, Via Stevani 5, 29100 Piacenza, Italy, www.brutusrecords.com

Entertainment System, The – S/T, CDEP

This begins with an electronic homage to Bowie, then steps into a cooler sounding '80s wave punk, then to synth pop to Goth-like rock. There's also an amazing cover of the Smith's "Big Mouth Strikes Again" and a really cool soundscape tribute to the Atari game system. Innovative stuff. (DM)
Thick As Thieves, PMB# 252, 302 Bedford Ave., Brooklyn, NY 11211, www.thickasthieves.com

Envy / Iscariote – split, 10"

It's annoying when a split record doesn't have labeled sides, and it's a bad sign when you can't tell if you have it set to the right speed. Once it's all figured out, you have intense, searing screamo/hard core with big, loud guitars. Envy wins this battle of the bands—excellent. (KR)
Code of Ethics, 10101 Orange Ranch, Tucson, AZ 85742, codeofethicsrecs@hotmail.com

9 Epoxies – Synthesized, 7"

Before we review this record, let it be known that, as of this very moment, the Epoxies are the supreme rulers of the world. Their brand of infectious synth/new wave/punk is so overwhelmingly catchy that it is impossible not to sing along and drum your steering wheel while driving. You must see them live when they embark on another tour this spring; one show I saw is definitely in my top five shows of all time. I have never seen a band so perfect, from the lights, attire, and attitude while playing to a dozen people on a Sunday night. Most bands would have quickly gone through the

don't look down / eyes of autumn

motions and skipped town. After you have heard their first single and LP, you will want their newest single, *Synthesized*. The title track could have fit in their long player, but it would have stood out as a midtempo rocker with more polished vocals. That's not bad, either. The B-side is an absolutely killer cover of Alice Cooper's new wave hit, "(We're All) Clones." Both tracks highlight the polished, hard-working band and the best front(wo)man in the industry, Roxy Epoxy. (EA)
Dirtnap Records, PO Box 21249, Seattle, WA 98111, www.dirtnaprecs.com

9 Ergs, The – The Ben Kweller EP, CDEP

Three guys name Erg come from New Jersey to play for you some of the dopest, goofy garage punk since Green Day's *Kerplunk!* Snotty and loud, the band plays like they're passing through different moods. *The Ben Kweller EP* opens with the EP's namesake, "Ben Kweller," a quick poppy rocker that showcases the tone of the record. Jeff Erg's quick trills and bar-chorded rhythm guitar leads the song, while Joey Erg's bass line bounces all over the place. Mikey Erg, holding the songs 4/4 beat from behind the drum kit, sings about Kweller just long enough to finish the song before the band sonically collapses into a sweaty heap on the floor. "Nambla Grey Area," a 10-second ode written for Allen Ginsberg, runs like any song from DC's early-'80s hardcore scene. "Pool Pass" is pop punk at its finest—silly, carefree, and accessible, the song is perfect for what it is. Songs about girls, Squeeze, and personal reflections, each track burns with laughter and an urgent distress that all this could end in a moment. (GBS)
Fongul, 11 Mercury Circle, South Amboy, NJ 08879

ESL?! – Horseshoes & Hand Grenades, CD

This album reminds me what I like about punk rock. Musically, it's not great; the "whoa-oh-oh" vocals are often flat, and this style of 1-2-3-4 pop-punk is tired with a capital T. But this trio is so fervent in revealing their political and personal turmoil that it's hard not to admire their moxie. (AT)
Geykido Comet Records, PO Box 3743, Laguna Hills, CA 92654, www.gcrecords.com

9 Eyes Of Autumn – Hello, CD

They have a song titled "......" Figure that one out. It gives me no pleasure to label a band "emo math rock," but they brought it on themselves by mixing complicated, intense instrumental bursts with sparse, wounded vocal sections and having absurdly long songs with pretentious names. But

look, if I'm being hard on these guys, it's because I'm jealous. They're great, really great, and they're young enough to make a reviewer feel like a bitter old man at 23. They're like Rum Diary meets The Dismemberment Plan. Although they do create some hooks and climactic convergences that will stick with you, they really excel at atmosphere and tone and creating magical drawn-out soundscapes. And then there's that instrumental sound in the middle that sounds like the Mountain Goats. What's that one all about? It's really good, too. (DAL) 54°40' or Fight!, PO Box 1601, Acme, MI 49610-1601, www.fiftyfourfortyorfight.com

9 Falling, The – Cardinal, CDEP

The first song starts the EP out with an unmemorable, Fugazi-style tune. The second song, on the other hand, has just what I'm looking for: great harmonizing vocals over excellent guitar riffs that create a tension-soaked build up and climax with a fucking great chorus. The next three songs do not disappoint, either, using the same formula without becoming boring for a second. I am not familiar with this band, even though I lived near Milwaukee last year, which makes me sad that it's unlikely I will see them in the near future. I am officially impressed—and homesick for the Midwest and bands like this one. Thanks a lot, The Falling. Sniff, sniff. (TK) No Karma Records, PO Box 71203, Milwaukee, WI 53211-7303, www.nokarma.com

Fancy Pants And The Cellphones - Demo, CDEP

The Fancy Pants And The Cellphones demo is a catchy five-song collection of snotty basement pop punk. The fuzzy low-fi guitars sound vaguely similar to Toys That Kill, while the lyrics wander like the attention span of a teenager with ADD. A good time. (GBS) Mexican Night Records, PO Box 208, Saxtons River, VT 05154, www.fancypants.cjb.net

9 Farse – Boxing Clever, CD

Here's a mix of music I never thought would be combined: new pop/emo-punk à la New Found Glory or Saves the Day fused with the Sublime album *40 Oz. To Freedom*. Personally, I wouldn't be too interested in listening to that, but I can't stop playing this CD. It's just so interesting. Farse is extremely tight, filling almost all of their songs with unpredictable changes that stay interesting upon subsequent listens. Just try not to tap your feet to this music. I dare you. The way their press release makes it sound, they're pretty popular in the UK,

touring with [sponge], a band that's apparently big in the British ska-punk scene. I have a feeling we will be seeing more of this West Midlands band here in the United States in the months to come. (TK) Moon Ska Europe, PO Box 184, Ashford, Kent TN24 0ZS, www.moonskaeurope.com

Figgs, The – Slow Charm, CD

Surprisingly catchy, midtempo rock abounds on an album that serves as the missing link between Everclear and Foo Fighters without being generic, as such a description might suggest. Subtle hints of old-school-rock influences and traditional indie-rock hooks help separate *Slow Charm* from the ever-growing pile of trendy rock crap. (BN) Hearbox Recordings, PO Box 410145, Cambridge, MA 02141, www.hearbox.com

Fire Next Time, The - Sound Of A Threat, CD

The Fire Next Time was a vigorously professional emo supergroup that came and went like the wind, with this CD as the premiere surviving memento of their pretentious existence. Innovative drum patterns, stocky, repetitive guitar lines and pseudo-bright lyrics can't mask the fact that this is crybaby bullshit. (AE)

Code of Ethics, 10101 N. Orange Ranch Road, Tucson, AZ 85742; Dim Mak Records, PO Box 14041, Santa Barbara, CA 93107, www.dimmak.com

Fit, The – Gas and Electric, CDEP

Rhythmic and catchy! This Brooklyn trio busts out with some spastic, dancy rock 'n' roll punk tunes that don't give you the option to sit still. The vocal harmonies are complex and nothing short of amazing. (TK) Self-Released, www.thefit.org

Five Cent Deposit – We Have Your Daughter, CD

We have your daughter? What? Warped Tour-style anthemic pop punk from Long Island with big harmonizing choruses and lyrics about having fun and drinking beer. But it has a coming-of-age undercurrent and a drummer who plays really fast and is probably all sweaty. (DAL) Radical Records, 77 Bleecker St., #C2-21, New York, NY 10012, www.radicalrecords.com

Flatcat - Better Luck Next Time, CD

Flatcat rocks the mid-'90s-Fat-Wreck-style pop punk à la No Use For A Name. Their melodic pop punk and multiple harmonies tend to concern

relationships, partying, and breaking up. *Better Luck Next Time* includes a cover of the Descendents' "Silly Girl." (GBS) Eye Spy Records, PO Box 89, 8000 Brugge 1, Belgium, www.fade.to/eyespy

Flatpoint A/V – S/T, CD and 7"

This 7" is a great power-punk piece with really good production. Fans of the Dag Nasty/Rites Of Spring sound would really get into this. You have to order one of the first 200 copies to receive the complimentary 11-track CD of earlier recordings. (EA) RAI/Ryan, 500 South Congress Ave. #225 Austin, TX 78704

Fourth Rotor – Seize, CD

This is one band that can't be caught in a genre. Former members of V.Reverse and Ambition Mission play some intelligent (and weird) music that sounds vaguely like Nomeansno and Firehose. Bonus: It's a digitally enhanced CD filled with live video, some interviews, and a slideshow of fliers and pics of the band. (TK) Electric Noise Records, 2842 N. Springfield Ave., Chicago, IL 60618-7218, www.fourthrotor.com

Fuzz Townsend – S/T, CD

Solo project from a member of Pop Will Eat Itself that bounces and loops through some sunny big beats. It's similar in nature to the last Flaming Lips record, minus any intelligent lyrics, and is a lot more "club" oriented. (AS) Stinky Records, 511 Avenue of the Americas, PMB #153, New York, NY 10011-8436, www.stinkyrecords.com

G-77 - Peine De Vie, CD

I guess monsters have feelings too. Seven tracks growl by, as yet another band releases more of that screamy emo that seems to be the rage these days. I just hate this entire subgenre, and I hate frogs too. (JG) Exutoire Records, www.exutoirerecords.com

9 Gasolheads – Lying Shooter Position, CD

From the opening scream to the final overdriven guitar riff, the Gasolheads never let up. Mixing early pop-punk with new wave and garage, these crazy French bastards speed through 13 songs in just over 23 minutes. I'd say they sound like the Briefs mixed with some early Ramones and a large dose of caffeine, but that wouldn't do this gem of a disc justice. It's got that Mutant Pop vibe going but then sends it to hell with raucous guitars and distorted vocals. The chaos never stops! Finally, an unpretentious

Reviewer Spotlight: Melissa Geils (MG)

At The Gates, *Slaughter Of The Soul*. We need more metalheads in punk rock, don't you think? Regardless, this spotlight goes out to all my punk rock metalhead comrades and anyone interested in delving into the heavy-metal genre. If you were to start buying some classic metal albums, you *must* have this one. It is one of the finest metal albums by one of the finest contemporary metal bands. At The Gates are progenitors of the infamous "Gothenburg Sound," blending death metal, blistering thrash, and heartbreakingly beautiful melodies. They are not unlike bands such as In Flames and Dark Tranquility, but they are slightly more fierce in their song structure and vocals. The balance between the ferocious metal licks and the acoustic, classically influenced balladry on this record is exquisite, to say the least. These 11 tracks of dark, thunderous beauty are sure to draw you into "the depths of blackness." To top things off, the album closes with one of the most powerful epic instrumentals in metal history, next to Metallica's "Orion." *Slaughter Of The Soul* was recently rereleased on vinyl as a part of Earache Records' vinyl reissue series (all 10 reissued records are essential) and is available on CD too.

Some favorite records of 2002: Blackalicious, *Blazing Arrow*; Epoxies, *S/T*; Radio 4, *Gotham*; The Siderunners, *Ain't Inventing The Wheel*; Spits, *S/T*.



punk release that dares to defy the current pop-punk/emo standard and teach these damn "new rock" bands a thing or two in the process. (BN) Lollipop Records, 7 Impasse Monsegur, 13016 Marseille, France, www.chez.com/lollipoprecords

Get Hustle – Dream Eagle, CD

Dream Eagle is a dark collection of unwieldy melodies utilizing a slightly distorted organ, a piano and drums to create a vaguely jazzy sound. Spoken word and singing are both present, which mix well with the chaotic instrumentals. It's an artsy, almost postpunk, potpourri of gloomy sonic experiments that work. (BN)

Three One G, PO Box 178262, San Diego, CA 92177, www.threoneg.com

Getaway, The – S/T, CD

Mid-'90s style melodic pop-punk with some early Blink beats thrown in for good measure. Flat vocals about heartbreak, heartache, arguments with significant others, and the road. (GBS) Re-Define Records, 28 Industrial St., Unit 116, Toronto, Ontario M4G 1Y9, www.re-define.com

Giardini Di Miro / Deep End – split, 10"

Postpunk with instrumental tendencies and electronica at heart on side A versus a spooky, psychedelic take on space rock on side B. Four songs' worth of friendly and pleasant, if a tad unconventional, indie explorations. (BN) Love Boat Records & Buttons, c/o Andrea Pomini, Casella Postale 118, 10064 Pinerolo (TO) Italy <http://stop.at/loveboat>

Go! For The Throat – Here and Now, CD

Anticipate being impressed! This old-school, hard-rocking hardcore unit from Philly sends 24 fast ones in under 22 minutes. There's some super-fancy and accomplished guitar and drum work with amazingly tight stops and starts and speedy playing. It's dense hardcore with calls and responses, crunchy, metal-tinged hooks and solos, and classic fast-punk riffs. These are balanced by moments of geek prog à la Emerson, Lake and Palmer, straight up rock 'n' roll, and found sound—the music just works. Everything's pretty fast, including Eddie Olson's vocals. Energizing and fun! (JS) Uprising Records, PO Box 42259, Philadelphia, PA 19104, www.uprisingrecords.com

Goin' Places – Girl Songwriting 101, CD

Alumni of Ramones University, majoring in The Queers (Joe King guest vocals on a track). Mutant

Pop fans will dig this. Favorite track: "Commercial Soft Drink Girl" that features some a cappella. (AA) Coldfront Records, PO Box 8345, Berkeley, CA 94707, www.coldfrontrecords.com

Gravity Index, The – S/T, CDEP

Pretty good, dark post-hardcore on this debut EP. Elements of Fugazi and Sweep The Leg Johnny are also thrown in there. Six tracks for your stinky ass. (JG) Modern Radio Record Label, PO Box 8886, Minneapolis, MN 55408, www.modern-radio.com

Gusto – No Evil Star, CD

Gusto is a fun two-piece (no bass) from Sacramento, with a major J Church influence and a bare-boned, stripped down sound that focuses on the rock. There's a comedic tinge to the vocals that's neither too subtle nor overdone. I bet Gusto puts on a kick-ass live show. (AE) Banazan Records, PO Box 2312, Orange, CA 92859, www.gustorocks.com

Half Visconte – Was It Fear, CD

The tedious and gripping songs makes you wonder what's so maladjusted about them to provoke such nervous melody. Delicate indie rock that freaks out like a little kid who hides a mortifying pants-wetting habit. The mathy instrumentation and impeccable drumming warrant wearing heavy glasses. (VC) This Argonaut Music, PO Box 32048, Phoenix, AZ 85275, www.sunsetalliance.net

Hate Mail Express – 12x4, CD

Jon Spencer clones from Santa Cruz, Calif. Chaotic garage rock that sounds like the Germs fornicated with Bo Diddley. An EP or 7" would have sufficed. (GBS) S.P.A.M Records, PO Box 21588, El Sobrante, CA 94820-1588, www.spamrecords.org

Heidnik – Nothing, CD

Heavy-as-hell-metal-grindcore. This sounds like a hardcore exorcism! Watch out for the pea soup, and hide your crucifixes. (JG) Too Damn Hype, PO Box 63524, Philadelphia, PA 19147, www.toodamnhype.com

Hello Amsterdam – ...How Are You?, CD

This "emo explosion" is really starting to wear thin. So it's refreshing to hear a band like Hello Amsterdam, unconcerned with labels and fame, just play music for the love of it. Luscious melodies abound on this indie masterpiece with striking

vocals and rich instrumentals seamlessly blending pop and rock. (BN)

Spy Hop Records, 353 West Pierpont Ave. #200, Salt Lake City, UT 84101, www.spyhop.org

Henry Fiats Open Sore – Adulterer Oriented Rock, CD

It's easy to understand why the unfortunately named Henry Fiats Open Sore get compared to their compatriots The Hives. Both bands assault the garage-rock genre with style gimmicks and a "we're too cool" attitude. HFOS proves to be the bigger fans of mediocre, snotty hardcore in this singles collection. (JD)

Coldfront Records, PO Box 8345, Berkeley, CA 94707, www.coldfrontrecords.com

Herod – Execution Protocol, CD

It is so nice to know that not everyone has turned to acoustic guitars and sappy love songs ready for the music television. Herod gives you throaty hard core with great harmonies and drumming. (EA) Too Damn Hype, PO Box 63524, Philadelphia, PA 19147, www.toodamnhype.com

Heros Severum – Wonderful Educated Bear, CD

Herky-jerky guitars, repetitive building melodies, and a well-timed rhythm section: Yes, it's math rock (emphasis on *rock*), but this time there's no bass. Though all three members of Heros Severum contribute vocals, the main man on the mic got on my nerves. You'll either love the male/female singsong, or, like me, you'll find it irritating. (AT) Two Sheds Music, PO Box 5455, Atlanta, GA 31107

Holy Ghost, The – Color Sympathy, CD

This is a short record from the Brooklyn band who made quite a splash with their debut record earlier this year. They travel around the fringes of the "art rock" genre with its emphasis on swirling, layered instrumentation and stylized vocals. What differentiates The Holy Ghost is their liveliness. They keep the moody tunes flowing with adrenaline, and the results are engaging and memorable. This record starts with a title track that's just fantastic, a song really worthy of being remembered and hummed for years to come. Although the album loses some steam and degenerates into some dull droning tunes, it picks up again with some forceful later tracks. So, do you think they get tired of people asking if they're going on tour with The Father and The Son? No, that's just me? Sorry. (DAL) Clearly, 314 23rd St., Brooklyn, NY 11215, www.clearlyrecords.com

Reviewer Spotlight: Patrick Sayers (PS)

Danzig II: *Lucifuge*. Before The Misfits, there was Danzig—at least in terms of my personal exposure. Eventually, I'd get my history straight, but my loyalty belongs to *Lucifuge*. Released in 1990, when music about the Devil was still relatively scary (c'mon, I was 12), the Second Coming of Danzig never left my Walkman that year. Long ago, Glen was a punk, but you'd never know from this record. *Lucifuge* shows what happens when Glen, Chuck Biscuits and two Samhain hangovers can do when they wrap their meaty arms around some blues-based rock. From the moment "Long Way Back From Hell" begins, I am possessed: My arms hurt from too much air guitar, my knees hurt from imitating Chuck's brutal, monster-boogie drumming, and my throat is hoarse from mimicking Glen's wolf-like howls. Perhaps our muscle-bound maestro forgot to renew his deal with the devil, because nearly everything after this album just wasn't as good. *How The Gods Kill* had a few brief moments, and Danzig's solo synth-phony *Black Aria* was an interesting idea, but somewhere along the way, Glen thought it would be wise to fire his great band and change direction to watered down industrial rock. I'll pray to my inverted cross for hopes of a *Lucifuge*-era Danzig reunion.

A belated "Best of 2002" list: Rye Coalition, *On Top*; Nas, *Stillmatic*; Milemarker, *Satanic Versus*; Friend/Enemy; Hot Snakes, *Suicide Invoice*. Isis, *Oceanic*; The Mars Volta EP; Queens of the Stone Age, *Songs for the Deaf*.

Hope And Suicide - Razorblade Smile, CD

This band features members of Bloodlet and Measured In Grey playing six songs that shift from metal to hardcore and even a hint of prog rock. These days, every hardcore band is trying for something a bit more melodic, thankfully Hope And Suicide do so with good taste. (PS)
 Ides of March, PO Box 722, Wappingers Falls NY 12590

Horror Show - Our Design, CD

Turbulent, fast-as-hell hardcore that'll take you back to 1988—this is as old-school as you can get in 2002. Fast, loud, gang-vocal choruses, dark lyrics, slower melodic breakdowns, it's all here. A great new release for all you hardcore purists. (MG)
 Deathwish Inc., 10 Lothrop St., Beverly, MA 01915, www.deathwishinc.com

⌘ Hunches, The - Yes. No. Shut It., CD

Pow! You were just punched in the face by the goddamn Hunches. It hurts, and your ears are ringing. Could it be from the constant feedback and noise? Your nose is swelling, and your eyes are watering. Maybe it is just the screaming assault of the guitars. The next day you wake up with a headache and aren't sure if you should have a chaser of the Hunches by skipping to the last track of their debut LP, a cover of the Electric Eels' "Accident." You sure didn't hear it last night 'cause you didn't make it to the end—way too much blood rushing to your head. Portland hasn't been this mean to you since you saw Dead Moon, or was it the Wipers way back when? Don't dismiss these young ones, in garage-rock terms, as a rip-off of the Oblivians, because underneath the noise there are some melodies that make *Yes. No. Shut It.* shine like a beacon of hope. (EA)
 In The Red Records, 1118 W. Magnolia Blvd., PO Box 208, Burbank, CA 91506, www.inthere-drecords.com

⌘ J Church - Palestine, CD

First off, *buy this record!* It is a benefit for the fire at Honey Bear Records, which wiped out almost everything owner Lance Hahn had, including all past and future Honey Bear releases. More than \$40,000 in damages in all. With the depressing facts out of the way, this record is fucking cool and really different. It has more of a lo-fi sound than past J Church releases, mostly because these songs (all 14 of them previously unreleased) were recorded as demos in between *The Drama Of Alienation* and *One Mississippi*. Palestine is the first of five J Church demo releases scheduled for the near future. If you

liked J Church before, you can easily appreciate the DIY, low-budget recordings with the insightful lyrics they're known for. Very enjoyable. (TK)
 Honey Bear Records, 1730 E Oltorf, #135, Austin, TX 78741, www.hbrerecords.org

Jeniger - S/T, 12"

The cover suggests, "I am going to be slow German metal that involves screaming about urban ennui and despair." But no, it sounded like part of Ebullition's 1996 roster. Awesome! Then I realized I had the RPM wrong. Oops. Whether you like the hard stuff yelpy or groany, Jeniger's got it covered at either speed. (AT)
 Ruin Nation, PO Box 1417 49363, Vechta, Germany, rnrstvie@aol.com

Joan Of Arse - Distant Hearts, A Little Closer, CD

This brings to mind the days of Pavement and Archers Of Loaf. Mellow indie rock with clever/quirky lyrics and some soulful guitar parts. They also include some mandolin, accordion and harmonica, but they're very understated and work well with the mood. Gentle music for gentle creatures. (NS)
 Flameshovel Records, 1658 N. Milwaukee #276, Chicago, IL 60647, www.flameshovel.com

Johnie 3 - Sit On It, CD

Obligatory badly written review of the month: I am pretty sure the Fonz wouldn't appreciate this witless, muddy-sounding clone of the Queers. (EA)
 Self-released, www.johnie3.iuma.com

Julius Bragg - Transceiver, CD

The press release calls this "modern rock," and who am I to argue? Modern enough to be overproduced and marketed as "perfection" despite being stripped of any integrity by overzealous engineers. It's a clean-cut Creed; MTV folk will be pleased while I'd prefer a little more diversity in the sound. (BN)
 Maniac Records, www.maniacrerecords.com

Kamikaze - S/T, CDR

Indie rock trying to hide from the evil title of "emo." Kamikaze has gone similar road as Cave-In: angry hXc rock transcending emo into something a little more prog to spacey rock. Very well done overall if you dig the moody rock. (DM)
 Kamikaze, http://kamikaze.tripod.com

Kennedy - S/T, CD

R&B-influenced rock 'n' roll mixed with some psychedelic sounds. This record has an overall '60s retro feel, but Kennedy can't manage to shake the contem-

porary indie-rock sound, even with the use of organs and harmonicas. And Radiohead mixed with late-'60s Stones is no good thing, my friends. (MG)
 Sea Level Records, 1716 W. Sunset Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90026, www.sealevelrecords.com

Kimone - Meres Of Twilight, CD

With so many small aural details—effective dynamics, sparkling guitars, nuanced vocals—Kimone's debut is often ethereal and occasionally remarkable. These songs are spacey, muted, and attainably abstract; it's for this reason alone that the singer can get away with sounding like Chris deBurgh. (AT)
 Silverthree, PO Box 3621, Fairfax, VA 22038, www.silvertree.com

Knockout - Searching For Solid Ground, CD

Attack of the clones! Yet *another* band that sounds *exactly* like Newfound Glory. In their pictures, the members of the band look like they're modeling for Hot Topic. If you don't have hair on your balls, you'll probably like this, or if you're 16 and have no balls. (JG)
 Fearless Records, 13772 Goldenwest 545, Westminster, CA 92683, www.fearlessrecords.com

Krescent 4 - S/T, CDEP

Hey, remember the '90s? Well these guys do! Retro grunge mixed with some posthardcore riffage. Sounds like Stone Temple Pilots or Alice In Chains. All they need now is a vigorous heroin addiction for authenticity. (NS)
 Self-released, www.krescent4.com

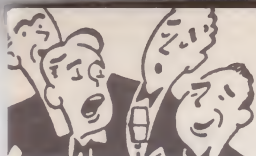
⌘ Krunchies, The - Crotch Rock, CD

The art on the CD of this DIY-or-die retro-punk trio reminds me of the Gories, who were simply Dan, Mick and Peg from Detroit. No bullshit there. More political than the Gories on songs like "Loosen Up Your Bible Belt," these Chicagoans have produced a memorable debut. They are Kevin, Amanda and brother Matt, whose crunchy, ringing and jangling guitar chops have force. Besides her bass licks, Amanda's also a damn fast, confident and cute punk vocalist with lots o' sassy attitude to spare, especially when she bandies around the word "ass" and asks you to kiss it. Although simple, the lyrics are smart and fun. Get your hands on this sweet release. (JS)
 Self-released, 6021 Harlem Ave., Chicago, IL 60631, http://thekrunchies.tripod.com

Reviewer Spotlight: Neal Shah (NS)

Christ On A Crutch, *Crime Pays When Pigs Die*. I think the bass doesn't get enough respect in hardcore music, though I guess it doesn't get much use in modern hardcore. But I miss how the bassist was a more prominent member of bands, like in RKL, Naked Raygun or my pick of the month, Christ On A Crutch. Now their first album was decent, but that was before their move from one Washington (D.C.) to the other, and more importantly, before the addition of Nate Mendel on bass. I'm sure that new peers like Poison Idea and the Accused helped bring out a more caustic sound, but I think the bass on COAC's second album, *Crime Pays When Pigs Die*, really makes this album awesome. That thick rumbling holds these songs together and works well against the punishing guitars and drums. Besides the bass, this is just a great punk album. The lyrics attack Christians, sXe, conformity and government control in ways that are still relevant today. The singer had a sort of melodic yelling style. There's even a good cover of Johnny Cash's "Folsom Prison Blues." When I listen to an album like this, I realize how much more creative hardcore was just 10 years ago and wonder why it got so stagnant.

Jamaica Me Crazy! Leatherface, Farside, SNFU, Let It Burn, Gang Green, Dresden 45, Rival Schools, Drunk Injuns, Pailhead, CYE finale (holy shit).



La Traction – Aussi Long Sera Le Chemin, LP

Whoa! This is totally Blondie meets the Misfits. Guitar-driven punk with sugary female vocals, almost entirely in French, that rock despite the obvious language barrier. Hell, when the melody is catchy, and the vocals lull you to sleep, who cares what the hell the songs are about anyway? (BN) Fraction, 65 Bd Voltaire, 75011 Paris, France

Leeches, The – Suck, CD

Art rock is a hit-or-miss genre. The key is to be able to play music and understand composition enough to destroy it correctly. The Leeches will catch you off-guard because they destroy composition like Wire, yet play standard, three-chord punk at other times. The Leeches' home base of England would have put them on a bill with Huggy Bear if it were half a decade earlier. Lizzi Wood's vocals are expressive and filled with anger, hope, and lust at different times. Recorded on a budget, this disc sounds so clean and bright that any money saved is well-earned. Do you want something new that your friends aren't listening to yet? (EA) Self-released, www.theleeches.com

Lepers, The – The Love From Above, CD

The Lepers are from that hip town, Lincoln, Neb., with its tremendous monument to the penis, the state capitol. Proud and erect with a man sewing seeds up top, locals call it "the prick of the prairie." More psychedelic (read: Doors) than phallic, The Lepers sound pretty and shimmering. (JS) Caulfield Records, PO Box 84323, Lincoln NE 68501, www.caulfieldrecords.com

Leval Blessing – S/T, CD

This is the type of belching sludge metal where you expect the lyrics to be about kayaking around the fire pits of hell, but they seem like they're "singing" about consumer culture. Sample lyrics: "Will die, will die, will die." (DAL) Barbarian, 254 W. Gilman, Madison, WI 53703

Liar's Academy – Trading My Life, CDEP

There are some band names that get thrown around a lot, and you assume they sound like any other band in the genre being discussed. I would overhear scenesters at random shows say how they love or hate the new Elliott or Hot Water Music, then follow it up by asking if they heard the new Liar's Academy. My assumption was way off. The first thing I thought of when I threw in this disappointingly short EP was

the striking similarity with early '90s Lemonheads or Replacements: simple, straight-to-the-point songwriting with flowing vocals that add so much to the music. I am addicted to this band now and am upset that I never gave their 2001 debut, *Not News Is Good News*, a listen. You all know the old saying about the word "assume," so don't make the same mistake I did. If you happen to be a fan well-written early-'90's pop-rock, you will love this EP. (TK) Equal Vision Records, PO Box 14, Hudson, NY 12534, www.equalvision.com

Lifter Puller – Soft Rock, 2xCD

Indie-pop stars Lifter Puller release a retrospective double disc of goodies. Some unreleased songs and records from 1996 to 2000. With 40 remastered tracks, this is quite a release. You should check out their website, www.lifterpuller.com, for all lyrics and what people have searched for when finding their site by accident. (EA) The Self-Starter Foundation, PO Box 1562 New York, NY 10276, www.selfstarterfoundation.com

Lipstick Pickups / Bikini Bumps – split, 7"

The Lipstick Pickups play three songs of snotty female-fronted punk. The Bikini Bumps play similar snotty garage punk with male vocals. They're a little better musically, but not as annoyingly fun as the Lipstick Pickups. Still, these are both good bands that will get your toes tappin'. (NS) G.C., PO Box 3743, Laguna Hills, CA 92654; Erectords, PO Box 6224, Anaheim, CA 92816, www.gcrecords.com

Lisboa - The Recreation, CDEP

Six synthesized pop songs, mediocre rock 'n' roll. Can't really say much, except that they spelled their own name wrong in the bio—dingbats. (JG) Vertical Verve Records, PO Box 2097, Riverview, MI 48192, www.verticalverve.com

Local Oafs / The Pricks - split, 7"

This is one of two remarkable Swedish seven inches I reviewed this issue. Local Oafs are described on the sleeve as "unambitious mongos with piss in their pants and shit in their mouths!" Believe it or not, that's a fine description. They play crazy, FYP-inspired punk as sloppily as possible. Supposedly they have their own 7" with 23 songs on it. Here they only do five songs on their side of the split (how "unambitious"), including a daffy Johnny Cash cover. The Pricks, not to be confused with the note-

la traction / lyndsay diaries, the

worthy Ohio band of the same name, are described on the sleeve as "shitty and fast music supplied by shitty and fast shit people!" Again, this is a fine description. Despite sounding less like FYP than Local Oafs, The Pricks do an FYP cover on their side as well as two originals, one titled "Child Molester." The singer is a look-alike of Cheech Marin, but I think he's Swedish. This is one of those records with packaging as fun as the music. I think the label's "S" logo is a parody of a Skrewdriver emblem, but it's a funny logo whether or not that's the intent. (AE) Subway Star Records, Jansson, Ringvägen 37B, 611 35 Nyköping, Sweden, www.subwaystar.cjb.net

Lorelei – Our Minds Have Been Electrified, CD

This female-fronted trio likes to tune down, but the music has a lightness to it—like a storm cloud (or something). The combination of darker and lighter elements works well. (DM) Ice-Made, www.ice-made.com

Low-Beam - Fashionable Driving Songs, CDEP

You'll find few surprises in Low-Beam's modified college rock, represented here by six nice-but-similar tracks. Warm keyboards and breathy vocals suggest a gentle '60s influence. At times, these laid-back and jangly pop songs reminded me of a less psychedelic, less experimental Ladybug Transistor. (AT) Cosmodemonic Telegraph, 46 State St., New London, CT 06320, www.low-beam.com

Lying In States – The Bewildered Herd, CD

The problem with this kind of slow, sprawling indie-punk jam rock is that there's a fine line between lush and boring, and unfortunately they cross it. This EP has its moments, though, particularly when they employ a keyboard and sound like someone put Stereolab in a blender. (DAL) Harmless Records, 1218 W. Hood Ave., #2, Chicago, IL 60660, www.harmlessrecords.com

Lyndsay Diaries, The – The Tops of Trees are on Fire, CD

Pretty, confessional music from a miserable post-emo boy, with layers of melody, strummed guitar, keyboards, and yearning (some might say whining—but they're nice) vocals. It's serious and sad, but leans toward transcendent. Think a strummier Elliott Smith with more of a folksy voice, or a less complex Bright Eyes. (JS) The Militia Group, 2923 Warner Ave., Suite K, Huntington Beach, CA 92647, www.themilitiagroup.com

Reviewer Spotlight: Jason Gitzlaff (JG)

Supernova, *Ages 3 & Up*. In the mid- to late '90s, three aliens in silver space suits escaped from their devastated home world of Cynot 3 and crash-landed on earth. They soon came upon rock 'n' roll and decided it was the best outlet for them to conquer our world. After all, what has more influence than pop culture? And that's what Supernova did so well: They mastered the craft of simple, poppy, three-chord punk rock. While other bands make careers off of songs based on romance or politics, Supernova made super-ditties based almost randomly upon the mundane. Oreos, books, math class, moms, drooling, swimming, or even getting a haircut were all topics that never rocked harder (if at all). And let's not forget their underground hit "Chewbacca," which was featured on Kevin Smith's *Clerks* soundtrack, that had everyone in the bars chanting along "WHAT A WOOKIEE!" Supernova sadly only released two studio albums, both on Amphetamine Reptile Records. The first and best, *Ages 3 & Up*, is a pop-punk classic and can probably be found in bargain bins across the country. The second album, *rocks* (as depicted by a photo of three rocks) is another fun-filled chapter in the legacy of Supernova. Finally, if you can't get enough of these auslanders, Sympathy For The Record Industry recently released all the hard-to-find tracks on one CD, *Pop As A Weapon*, a must-have for any Supernova zealot.

Remaining Constant: Bad Astronaut, *Houston We Have A Drinking Problem*; The Queers, *Pleasant Screams*; Pop Unknown, *If Arsenic Falls Try Algebra*; Snuff, *Disposable Income*; The Donnas, *Spend The Night*.

Mae – S/T, CDEP

Four tracks of sweet, sappy, slow-moving music. Each song starts off quietly and calmly, rolling toward the obligatory harder "rock guitar" grand finale. There are a couple of instances in which keyboards give a slight Rentals feel. This is radio-friendly rock without being a Jimmy Eat World rip-off. (MG)
Self-released, www.whatismae.com

Man Alive! – Heart, Hands and Mind

Rough, scrappy and fun punk from this Colorado band. They mix elements of hardcore, pop punk and a hint (just a hint) of ska to create some catchy, honest songs. Think Dillinger Four, Against Me and East Bay circa 1988. If you like No Idea's current bands, you should like this. (NS)
Universal Warning Records, 2310 Light House Ct., Richmond, VA 23294, www.universalwarningrecords.com

♂ Manda And The Marbles – More Seduction, CD

This one gets the "Perfect CD For Anything" Award. It's a remastered 14-track rerelease of the original 10-track version. This power-pop trio has that Go-Go's thing going on, but that hardly does them any justice. Manda and the boys are tops when it comes to rock sensibility; the melodies, music, voice, and hooks go completely unmatched in comparison. I came out of retirement to play air guitar with this one—it's that catchy. It's upbeat the whole way through, and it will put a smile on your face, taming even the most savage metalhead or dirt punk in your life. This is easily one of my new favorite records. (DM)
Go-Kart Records, PO Box 20 New York City, NY 10012 www.GokartRecords.com

Manhunt – They Follow. I Fly., CD

Five songs of heavy metalcore with female vocals that switch from screaming to normal singing. Where are my Ashes CDs? There are some interesting guitar parts, but you and I have heard this done better before, haven't we? And as a semi-man, I feel the band name is very sexist. Change it to Persynhunt immediately. (NS)
Self-released, www.manhuntrock.com

Maogojiata – S/T, CDEP

The band name and cover art (psychedelic color swirling abstraction) made me think I was about to review some sort of DIY new age/world music. What we really have here, though, are five well-crafted indie-pop tunes that are equal parts Built To Spill and Beatles. (MG)
Good Forks Promotions, 5499 Claremont Ave. 8,

Oakland, CA 94618, www.goodforks.com

Masami Akita and Russell Haswell – Satanstornade, CD

Featuring Masami Akita of Merzbow, this disc is too painful for me even to finish. They describe it very well as: experimental, improvisation, death metal, extreme computer music, hardcore, grindcore, black metal, techno, electro acoustic, sound art, power electronics, temporary public sculpture, difficult. (EA)
Warp Records, PO Box 25378, London, NW5 16L, www.warprecords.com

Metrophon, CDEP

Pretty cool new waveish, or should I say inventive, punk rock. Better yet, I have a friend who would call it "neoteric." It's completely different from most things I've heard, and with the right help, it could be the next big thing. Like a more punk rock Interpol. (AS)
Self-released, www.metrophon.com

Metroplex – Everything Is Chrome In The Future, CD

It's the new style of punk rock here with overly anguished vocals and melodic guitar riffs. It reminds me of the multitudes of so-called "punk" bands currently played on MTV2. (AS)
Limekiln Records, PO Box 4064, Philadelphia, PA 19118, www.limekilnrecords.com

Mexican Blackbirds, The – Ain't Got No Time, 7"

This was recorded on a four-track, and you sure can tell. Aside from that, it's standard garage punk with yelled vocals—similar to New Bomb Turks, but not as good because it gets repetitious and boring. (KR)
Self-released, PO Box 7569, Tacoma, WA 98406, www.themexicanblackbirds.com

Midstates - Shadowing Ghosts, CD

Lush, melodic and intimate, this is haunting yet soothing neo-psychedelic pop from Chicago. Employing guitars, Wurlitzer, drums, bass and breathy, introspective male vocals (on the Nick Drake side), it sounds something like Flaming Lips crossed with the softer, dreamier side of the Velvet Underground. A very pretty debut. (JS)
Mental Monkey Records, PO Box 20068, Greeley Square Station New York, NY 10001-0005, www.mentalmonkeyrecords.com

Mijal Kahan - El Camino, CD

Indie rock from Israel. The yodeling is reminiscent of a dying cow fronting for the Partridge Family. Recommended for fans of The Strokes! (JG)
Fast Music, PO Box 14542, Tel Aviv 61144, Israel,

www.fastmusic.co.il

Mines – The Way The Wind Whips The Water, CD

They key word here is "diverse." I dare you to find a band as prolific in mixing seemingly unrelated melodies as these guys. It's pop with an edge and without the constraints. Soft vocals set against inventive melodies (piano, drums, guitars) make music for the love of it, and it shows. (BN)
Woodson Lateral Records, 2112 S. Spokane St., Seattle, WA 98144, www.woodsonlateral.com

Minethirtyseven – S/T, CDEP

This simple three-piece has mastered the art of the emotional, quiet-to-loud rock. They do three lo-fi sounding songs along the lines of Rainer Maria. (MG)
Self-released, 610 E. 14th, #4, Eugene, OR 97401

Mr. California And The State Police – I'm Gonna Kick You In The Head, CD

A disc filled with 52 goofy-ass tunes. And they don't get that annoying—well maybe a little, but that is a good thing. (BC)
Proud To Be Idiot Records, PO Box 410325, San Francisco, CA 94141-0325

♂ Miss Lonelyheart – Signal And Response, CD

This is one of those CDs that creeps up on you. At first it seemed decent, kind of ordinary. But by the third song I was hooked, bobbing along and enjoying their pleasant, unassuming style. That song, by the way ("On A Train Up A Tree"), is one of my new favorite songs. They kind of remind me of the corn-fed emo I used to hear around the Midwest. Like the older roster of bands on Jade Tree or Caulfield, but less emo and more rock, almost '80s sounding. There are a few moments where they remind me of the band that sings "Million Miles Away" from *Valley Girl*. Let's see if I can be more coherent. These guys are refreshing, no obvious influences or comparisons. Honest music and great songwriting with that jangly Fender guitar sound that alternates between ringing out and rocking out. Miss Lonelyheart really defies classification. Just quality rockin' pop music. As much as I like to scout out new music, this is a band that I probably never would have heard or heard of if it weren't sent to me, and that's a shame. No JFA cover, however. (NS)
Molecular Laboratories, PO Box 791, Frederick, MD 21705, www.molecularlaboratories.com

Misura – The Subtle Kiss Of A Sledgehammer, CD

Do you like metalcore? Do you like hard-as-fuck breakdowns and really angry songs about pain? If you do, this record is *still* probably too tough for

Reviewer Spotlight: Tim Kuehl (TK)

Tricky Dick, Discography. OK, so I was only 3 years old when the Minneapolis scene spawned bands like the Replacements and Husker Du. I had no idea what punk was about until the late '80s and early '90s, when the East Bay was one of the best pop-punk scenes ever. Regardless of what I missed due to time and distance, I am thankful that right around the time I started to go to shows, Chicago was developing an amazing scene. Tricky Dick was part of that, and hearing them brings back the only high-school memories I want to recall. Sloppy, high-energy punk rock filled with youthful vigor and growly vocal harmonies. It's pretty apparent that Crimpshrine influenced Tricky Dick, but they have a certain something that no other band could reproduce. Quincy Shanks released this discography a couple years ago, and you can also download some of their songs at www.quinyshanks.com. The CD has all of their recorded songs, plus a bunch of live tracks.

What the hell are you listening to? Radon, *We Bare All*; Big Star, *#1 Record*; Jets to Brazil, *Perfecting Loneliness*; Astrid Oto, *Discography*; Operation Cliff Clavin, *Who Needs Electricity?*



you. The vocalist is working on blowing out his vocal cords. If you dig Hatebreed, you will definitely dig this record. (DM)
Too Damn Hype, PO Box 63524 Philadelphia, PA 19147, www.toodamnhype.com

Mixtwitch – Smile For The Money Shot, CD
Dublin's Mixtwitch have the ska-core thing down pat. This record's full of simple melodies with hooks sharp enough to do some major damage. But it avoids the overbearing ska sound that prompted the sudden demise of the trend. It's a lot like Falling Sickness played at half-speed. (BN)
Moon Ska Europe, PO Box 184, Ashford, Kent, TN24 0ZS, England, www.moonskaeurope.com

Modern Day Urban Barbarians – Live At 16 Bits, CDR
Even though it's hard to judge this band because this live recording sounds like shit, I have a feeling they aren't good. This is a loose, noisy cacophony with weird sci-fi-movie sound effects (used way too much) and vocals that remind me of Vitreous Humor. Not recommended. (KR)
Self-released, www.mdub.com

Mono Addicted Acid Man – S/T, CD
Cacophonous, messy math rock from this Israeli trio. A typical song involves a head-bobbin' beat from the drummer and a crawlin' bass line and then total arithmetical chaos from multiple guitars and distant, slightly dissonant, vocals. (DAL)
Fast Music, PO Box 14542, Tel Aviv 61144, Israel, www.fastmusic.co.il

Moving Units – S/T, CDEP
I'm sure these guys will hate the comparison, but this sounds just like The Strokes (especially vocally). This is retro-minded, '80s-sounding new wave with dancy, almost funky bass lines. Not bad, not especially good—but majors looking for their own answer to The Strokes should give these guys a call. (KR)
Three One G, PO Box 178262, San Diego, CA 92177, www.threoneg.com

Murder Disco Xperience – S/T, 7"
Superfast hard-core songs with vocals that are almost growled. The songs hit hyperspeed right away and end before you can digest it all. Not my thing, but fans of this style would probably like these Germans. (KR)
Self-released, Narzissenweg 7, 70794 Filderstadt, Germany, www.muderdisco.de

Reviewer Spotlight: Dan Laidman (DAL)

Deep Wound. Before J Mascis turned sluggishness into fame and fortune and before Lou Barlow turned being a stoned sensitive guy into the pinnacle of indie-rock stardom, they played together in Dinosaur, made some great records, and had a terrible falling out. But before all that, way back in the dark days of 1982, they had a rollicking hardcore band called Deep Wound. Lost & Found came out with a collection of Deep Wound's recordings a few years back, and it's a seminally spastic masterpiece. J plays drums, Lou plays guitar, and two guys who probably sell insurance now play bass and sing. It's fast, thick, hardcore that manages to be angry and irreverent. There's a song about how they don't like their sisters, which starts off just sort of impish and light, but then all of a sudden the sister is a "perfect printout for society." Man. What's really fun about this collection is finding the traces of Lou and J's burgeoning personas. Witness "Lou's Anxiety Song," which is like the raunchy id of a sensitive Sebadoh song unleashed. Trawling for indie rock historical precedents aside, songs like "Dead Babies" and "Video Prick" stand up against some of the best hardcore being recorded anywhere at the time.

What's on? New Sleater-Kinney; new No Knife; semirecent Joan of Arc; really old Misfits; and out of time entirely Smart Went Crazy.

Murder In The Red Barn – Get In Before The Rain, CD
Murder In The Red Barn plays a confused, miserable blend of jazz and punk. The resulting amalgam is depressing and morose, though technically solid. But the mix isn't right, and it probably sounds far odder than its creators intended. Churches, synagogues, and mosques are more fun than this turd. (AE)
404 Records, PO Box 511580, Milwaukee, WI 53203, www.404records.com

Murray, Chris – Raw, CD
Sick of slick, overproduced and trendy ska knock-offs? Here's a release to smash the stale mold. All 14 of the tracks found on *Raw* were recorded on a hand-held Walkman, resulting in an extremely soulful collection of potent, acoustic reggae. The lyrics and vocals are heartfelt and the passion evident. (BN)
Asian Man Records, PO Box 35585, Monte Sereno, CA. 95030, www.asianmanrecords.com

My Spacecoaster – ep2, CD
No, it's my spacecoaster! Starts off quick, but then becomes a hybrid of Dave Matthews and Counting Crows with just enough distortion to qualify it as "postpunk." (DAL)
Lujo Records, 3209 Jennie Drive, Morgan City, LA 70380, www.lujorecords.com

Nakatomi Plaza – Private Property, CD
When was the last time a CD reminded you of Born Against, Crimpshrine, Fugazi and good emo pop all during one listen? Well that's the mix of styles here. This was previously released as an EP but now has three extra tracks. (AS)
Immigrant Sun Records, PO Box 150711, Brooklyn, NY 11215, www.immigrantsun.com

Nearly Deads, The – Kris and Holly Sides, 7"
Four songs from Portland's very own, this 7" is funny rock with a '50s-'60s feel to it. (BC)
Subway Star Records, subwaystar@hotmail.com

No Direction – Rhythms Like Tides, CD
Shit, if I had to call Milwaukee my hometown, I would be the pissed too. Eight intense songs that cover much ground (metal ground too) and push the listener into new musical worlds. (BC)
Boxman Records, 3473 N. Bremen St., Milwaukee, WI 53212

North Lincoln – Tour EP, CDEP
Straight-forward rock/punk in the vein of older, better Hot Water Music. Although not original in the least, it's still a kick-ass CD. All of the songs

have an anthem sing-along feeling to them, which admittedly had me singing along more than a couple of times in my van. I wish I hadn't missed said tour. (TK)
Self-Released, 1161 Fairfield Drive SW, Hudsonville, MI 49426, www.angelfire.com/mi2/northlincoln

Northstar – Is This Thing Loaded?, CD
On first listen, I wrote this off as another upbeat emo record. After a subsequent listen, I upgraded it to melodic punk rock. It's somewhere between the first Get Up Kids LP and the Boxer LP, but more sincere than most. I like this one a lot. (DM)
Triple Crown Records, 331 W. 57th St., #472, New York, NY 10019, www.triplecrownrecords.com

O'Hara, Alexis – In Abulia, CD
I wanted to like this, and to a small extent, I did. I can appreciate a musician who bucks trends, one gutsy enough to experiment with sounds, samples, instruments and spoken word/vocals. It's this tendency toward experimentation, however, that ultimately fails O'Hara, leaving a collection of peculiar, directionless work. (BN)
Grenadine Records, PO Box 42050, Montreal, QC Canada H2W 2T3, www.grenadinerecords.com

...Of Death – Generation Of Vipers, CDEP
Interesting hardcore taking twists and turns in tempo changes. The vocals are a constant high-pitched squeal over and fucking over. This is what a crust band fronted by Beaker from *The Muppet Show* would sound like. (JG)
Protocol Audio, 3917 Alamo Ave., Fort Worth, TX 76107

Onalaska – To Sing For Nights, CD
Slow, emotional, acoustic music from Dim Mak records. This band comprises of members of Minus the Bear, Botch, Kill Sadie, and Sharks Keep Moving. They know what they want, and their press release brags of their upcoming M2 video. What do you think will be popular after indie-punk-acoustic? (EA)
Dim Mak Records, PO Box 14041, Santa Barbara, CA 93107, www.dimmak.com

Oranges Band, The – On TV, CD
Man, after the stuff I've heard this issue, even something remotely tolerable sounds like a chorus of angels. This is more than tolerable; it's fun guitar pop that reminds me of their labelmate Ted Leo, though without Ted's falsetto. Jangly guitars, lots of melody, plenty of good stuff. (KR)
Lookout! Records, 3264 Adeline St., Berkeley, CA 94703, www.lookoutrecords.com

Peelander-Z - Rocket Gold Star, CD

Japanese punk bands always rule, so why not form one in New York? Peelander-Z may be the first band of its type: a goofy Japanese band formed in the United States. The song titles are all in English, but I think most of the lyrics are in Japanese. Song titles include "Happy Tanx," "Oi! Star!", and "Jack and Beans." The CD is enhanced and features a hilarious video for "Panda Punk!", which shows the band at their wacky best, but is hard to run. Their shtick is to play as fast as they can while still retaining a semblance of melody. They use lots of gimmicks live, including wacky costumes and other theatrics. It's pure genius to make a faux international band, but if I were them, I'd book shows as a band from Tokyo to get lazy locals to check 'em out. This is a band all the kids in your punk neighborhood will be talking about soon, unless all the kids get shipped off to war and die. (AE)
Self-released, Kengo Hioki, 48-25 43rd St., #5E, Woodside, NY 11377, www.peelander-z.com

Penis Fly Trap - Civil War II, CD

The Trap have been blasting three-chord punk for quite awhile. They are rude, crude, and very adolescent, just like most early-'80s punk bands were. Throw in an odd Devo cover, "Beautiful World" where they didn't even bother learning the guitar lead in the bridge—that's punk rock. (EA)
Self-released, PO Box 1159 Allston, MA 02134, www.penisflytrap.com

PGS - Worth A Thousand Words, CD

Radio-ready pop punk with those overly whiny vocals a la New Found Glory. Jesus, the way this guy sings the word "heart" makes me want to vomit. This whole CD makes me want to vomit. Six songs, and it's still too many. If you want some advice, break up. (NS)
Be Mine, PO Box 133, Franklin Park, IL 60131, www.beminerrecords.com

Piranhas, The - Erotic Grit Movies, CD

This deserves props for weirdness and originality. The first song comes on sounding like heavy-metal circus music with keyboards. After that intro, The Piranhas launch into their brand of bluesy, organ-heavy punk. Picture the Murder City Devils crossed with the Dickies. The drums are rhythmic and tribal at times. The guitars cut through like a spy-movie soundtrack. The bass lays down a thick groove. And the organ is always out front, like demented clown music. I can picture the singer rolling around on

the floor or taunting the audience. Everything comes together so well. These guys must have fun recording and playing this stuff. I don't normally listen to music like this (who does?), but this is really fucking cool. I'd love to see theme live. A definite keeper. (NS)

In The Red, 1118 W. Magnolia Blvd., PO Box 208, Burbank, CA 91506, www.intheredrecords.com

Plastic Peacocks - Radio Death, CD

Coming from Israel, Plastic Peacocks bring us a heavy, unrefined sound with slightly muffled vocals, forceful guitars and dynamic melodies that remind me of early Rage Against The Machine. *Radio Death* has grown on me with each listen, and it possesses a certain charm. (BN)
Fast Music Records, PO Box 14542 Tel Aviv, Israel, www.fastmusic.co.il

Plate Six - Operation: Chair Sit, CD

Birmingham's Plate Six deliver skillful, well-crafted guitar rock with intricate patterns and swirling hooks. The only problem is the vocals always fall into one of two extremes: grating barking or ashamed murmuring. (DAL)
Bent Rail Foundation, PO Box 2283, Birmingham, AL 35201, www.bentrail.com

Porcelain God - Home Taping Is Killing Music, CD

Residents of Williamsburg, Brooklyn, what are you doing? First you give us electroclash and now reissues of ridiculous psychedelic punk from 1982 (born of a bad acid trip and made with toy instruments, no less). I'm against corporate rock, too, but that doesn't make me for crud rock. (AT)
Slutfish Records, 327 Bedford Ave #A2, Brooklyn, NY 11211, www.slutfishrecords.com

Pressure Point - To Be Continued..., CD

GMM Records and street-punk are synonymous, a fact punctuated by the latest offering from Sacramento's Pressure Point. Pissed off, venomous vocals, strident guitars, intricate bass lines, catchy melodies, and honest lyrics full of street attitude—what working-class punk is all about. (BN)
GMM Records, PO Box 15234, Atlanta, GA 30333, www.gmmrecords.com

Project Rocket / Fall Out Boy - split, CDEP

I'd love to know what the Get Up Kids and Weezer think of the many "emo power pop" groups that sprouted after their own commercial success. Do they guzzle Cristalle in the tour bus, relievedly wiping their brows that their brands of girl-crazy pop

songs beat everyone else's to the punch? Or do they consider opening a lucrative six-week training camp so that bands like Project Rocket can even more shamelessly ape their singalongs and cheery breakdowns? Maybe the Kids, too, find great depth in lyrics that could be lifted from a Lil' Romeo slow jam ("Baby, oh baby, won't you wipe those tears away / 'Cause baby, you know that one day I'll be right here all for you.") It's all mildly amusing, considering the band comprises former members of notoriously confrontational suburban hardcore bands like Racetractor. Fall Out Boy, who also borrow from the Midwestern emo/power-chord formula, have a bit more kick. With a larger pop-punk influence, their songs are energetic and catchy (if, alas, lyrically immature and forgettable). "We like to play shows and hold hands," the band claims. This proclamation, accompanied by a press release that brags of Project Rocket's "Dashboard Confessional good looks," tells you everything you need to know. (AT)
Uprising Records, PO Box 42259, Philadelphia, PA 19104, www.uprisingrecords.com

Propagandhi - Cria Cuervos - Live, CD

Since 1993, Propagandhi has been playing scathingly brilliant politically charged songs. It's hard to tell when this live show was recorded (no information's provided) but Propagandhi's half draws heavily from 1996's *Less Talk, More Rock*. France's Cria Cuervos' brand of feminist political hardcore holds their own, finishing out the disc. (JD)
Diabolik, BP 4, 9411 Arcueil Cedex, France, www.dblk.fr.st

Punkache - Delicious/Halooshes, CD

Infectious Israeli pop-punk sung in Hebrew, so I have no idea what the hell they are singing about, but it doesn't matter too much. The music is fun and upbeat, and that's all that matters, right? Right. (TK)
Fast Music, PO Box 14542, Tel Aviv 61144, Israel, www.fastmusic.co.il

Quarterhorse, The - I Was On Fire For You, CD

Those who reside near swamps understand the humidity of summer air. It feels gross and tastes terrible. The Quarterhorse deftly articulate that feeling by offering bass-heavy sludge that sounds like The Melvins defecated on Shellac. Coincidentally, they cover the former, and Albini steers at the helm. (VC)
Radio Is Down, PMB 1436, 120 State Ave NE, Olympia, WA 98501, www.radioisdown.com

Reviewer Spotlight: (Mr)Dana Morse (DM)

V/A, *State Of The Union*. When I first bought this tape around 1990, I had no idea it benefited the *Community For Creative Nonviolence* and *American Civil Liberties Union*. I bought it because Fugazi was on it. I was getting into different varieties of punk rock, not just the "in your face" hardcore I had been listening to. The Lemonheads, Replacements, Crucifucks, etc., really caught my fancy at the time before I heard this record. Listening to this tape clinched it. I saw where punk was going, in D.C. at least, and it excited me. The variety was mind-blowing. Whether it was the demo-only track from Fugazi, the frantic sounds of Rain, the haunting Red Emma, the curious sounds of Shudder To Think, the acoustic battle cry of 3, the abrasive Broken Siren, the angry as hell Christ On A Crutch, I was sold. Punk began to make sense to me for the first time. This comp proved it was more than a fashion statement or a certain sound—it's community, it's beauty, it's preservation of one's voice. If you have a hell of a haircut to go with it, even better. Even today, it still sounds fresh and is one of my most listened-to records.

(Mr)Dana's pick of the Minute: KRS-One, *Mix Tape*; Manda and the Marbles, *More Seduction* (see review below); Matt Skiba/Kevin Seconds split (Matt rocked it); Elvis Costello, *My Aim Is True*; Boom Bip, *Seed to Sun*.



Race For Titles – S/T, CD

Indie rock and shoegazer mixed with midperiod Cure (*Faith or Pornography* maybe), when they were especially gloomy and guitar-driven. Dreamy vocals and light guitar effects accompanied by a steady beat and subtle bass. These guys would be at home on Deep Elm, and they'd be a fitting soundtrack for driving around in the rain with nowhere to go. Good stuff. (NS)

Redemption, PO Box 10238, Beverly Hills, CA 90213, www.redemption.net

Racebannon - Satan's Kickin' Yr Dick In, CD

Angry, chaotic, noisy, and screamy—if that doesn't describe great theater, I don't know what does. The latest from these Hoosier boys tells a story in five crazy, noisy parts. Flitting from abstract experimentation to heavy destruction, Racebannon has created a bizarre project that left me with a headache. (AT)

Secretly Canadian, 1021 South Walnut, Bloomington, IN 47401

Radio Years – So Long Sarcasm, CDEP

Much like the title of the band, this CD is ready to be distributed to the masses. Poppy songs about girls accompanied by a Moog organ on some of the tracks. I had to look twice to make sure this wasn't put out by Vagrant. (TK)

Lujo Records, 3209 Jennie Drive, Morgan City, LA 70380, www.lujorecords.com

Rambo / Crucial Unit – Sea of Steel Vol. 1 split, 7"

Rambo plays three songs in true Rambo style: growled vocals over sometimes melodic, sometimes ear-achingly thrashing hardcore. Crucial Unit does four fast-as-lightning, screamy, grinding tracks. Part of a bike-themed series, this comes with an insert full of articles and journal-styled essays about the political and personal benefits of alternative transportation. (MG)

Ed Walters Records, 2416 S. Warnock St., Philadelphia, PA 19148, www.edwaltersrecords.org

Rat Hole Sheikh, The - Jag Mar Sa Illa, 7"

The Rat Hole Sheikh conjures up a twisted blend of garage rock and delta blues that's certain to appeal to fans of The White Stripes or Hasil Adkins. Songs in Swedish and English that deal with hell, voodoo dolls and God knows what else. Who cares, I'm hooked! (PS)

Subway Star Records, no address given

Reagan National Crash Diet – Administration, CDEP

Somewhere in between '80s L.A. punk and straightforward pop-rock is where RNCD lie. It's sort of a strange mix, but oddly enough, it blends quite well—especially with the male and female vocals on different tracks. (TK)

Roostercow Records, PO Box 578174, Chicago, IL 60657, www.roostercow.com

Reagan National Crash Diet / Decibators – split, 7"

Two Chicago bands, one down-and-dirty rock 'n' roll taste. Reagan National Crash Diet plays the kind of music I'd listen to while chugging Pabst (if I drank beer). As for the Decibators, they're raw and strong straightforward rock. Neither is pretty or groundbreaking, but it's a fun listen. (AT)

Roostercow Records, PO Box 578174, Chicago, IL 60657, www.roostercow.com

Reagan's Polyp – Love Overdrive, 2xCD

A double disc of music from an obscure, though prolific, Arkansas band. Reagan's Polyp are self-proclaimed weird and loud, and they are right. Two discs of greatest hits from more than 25 releases. (EA)

Trashfish Entertainment Corporation, PO Box 56497, Little Rock, AR 72215, www.trashfish.com

Red Card – S/T, CD

Rockin' punk with attitude and swagger. This Brooklyn band might not be experiencing the hype their neighbors are getting, but they seem a lot less contrived and more talented. Off-kilter rock that lays down head-bobbing beats and throbbing basslines as a foundation. Over that they add sometimes surfy-sounding, other times electronic-sounding, guitars. The singer then adds impassioned singing and pleading vocals over everything. Red Card is one of those bands that probably feels at home performing for both the dance-club crowds and the rock-show crowds. This CD is honestly on caliber with bands like Interpol and the Yeah Yeah Yeahs, only it's a little more punk, a lot less derivative and generally just better. Let the hype machine begin with me. (NS)

Useless Chord, 206 Scholes St., #16, Brooklyn, NY 11206

Redbank - Machines Disregard My Pronoun, CD

Redbank have been playing together for several years, but their sound is annoyingly derivative and scattered all over the map. Songs echo mid-'90s

emocore (think Christie Front Drive). Perhaps the biggest mark against them was the foray into space rock on untitled track five. (JD)

Keith Records, 39A Highfield South, Rockferry, Wirral, CH42 4NA, UK, www.keithrecords.com

Redneck Manifesto, The - Cut Your Heart Off From Your Head, CDEP

The lovely packaging and initial pretty, mathy track suggest an album of music by nice art rockers. Yes and no: The next song is an aggressive, noisy blend of frenetic drumming and unexpected samples. Surprises throughout this instrumental EP are cohesive and interesting without trying too hard. (AT)

Red F Records, 7 Rue Puits Gaillet, 69001 Lyon, France

Redneck Manifesto, The – Thirtysixstrings, CD

Very talented and interesting instrumental indie rock. They're mostly mellow, but sometimes they get a little jazzy or slightly heavy and groovy. The CD layout is nice, too. Their name probably doesn't fit too well with their style. Good music for studying or doing it with your old lady. (NS)

Red f, 7 rue Puits Gaillet, 69001 Lyon, France

Retisonic – Lean Beat, CDEP

Jason Farrell's new, post-Bluetip project explores familiar territory for him. D.C.-style postpunk (produced by J. Robbins) with quirky riffs and starts and stops, sort of similar to Q And Not U. Farrell's going for the overachiever award on this record, playing guitar, bass and doing vocals. Joe Gorelick (ex-Garden Variety) handles the drum work and backing-vocal duties. It's not a good sign when the onesheet accompanying the record spends most of its time talking about Bluetip more than anything else, which is a shame because *Lean Beat* deserves more praise. Although it is familiar musical territory for these veterans, the record has more playful hooks than your average D.C. postpunk. The vocals have an '80s new-wave sound at times ("Malaligned," "Caught In The Light"), which sort of reinforces the off-center nature of this record. It's not quite what you expect, though "Filthy Way To Lose Yourself" does sound like traditional D.C. postpunk a la Jawbox. It's an auspicious start for a band whose members have a reputation to uphold. Nicely done, boys. (KR)

Silvertree Sound Recordings, PO Box 3621, Fairfax, VA 22038, www.silverthree.com

Reviewer Spotlight: Bart Niedzialkowski (BN)

The Broadways, *Broken Star*. The sudden demise of Slapstick had all the makings of a tragedy. Here was a group of friends that had conquered the Chicago underground scene with a tight blend of energetic punk and ska, a rarity in these parts. Despite their popularity and rumored million-dollar offers from major labels, however, the band members were simply fed up with the limitations of the skacore scene. It didn't take long for new bands to rise from their still-smoldering ashes: The Honor System, Tuesday, The Broadways, Alkaline Trio and The Lawrence Arms are all directly related to Slapstick, and while all of them enjoy(ed) success, none had as big an effect on me as The Broadways. Their sound was a little bit Jawbreaker and a little bit Jawbox, unlike anything I heard in the local scene. The intricate songs were full of swirling guitars, complex drum tracks and sophisticated patterns. The dueling vocals mixed the Slapstick's trademark crazed screeching with an angry, rough style. The socially and politically aware songs were often insightful, thought-provoking and urgent. I still like to reach for the *Broken Star* LP and the various 7" and compilation tracks on a regular basis. While the Broadways' reign was short, and the band disintegrated amidst controversy, the songs they recorded will always serve as a reminder of a time when postpunk was fresh, exciting and so full of fucking possibilities. (BN)

Best Broadways songs: "15 Minutes," "Lake Michigan," "Red Line," "Ben Moves To California," "This Routine," and the amazing "Dropjaw."

Ripcord - The Damage Is Done / Defiance Of Power, 12"

The discography of this mid-1980s English hardcore band packs in 23 fast, tight, and pissed-off songs about everything from animal rights ("Furder") to a healthy pregnancy. Their straight-up 1-2-3-4 punch has been done a thousand times since, but it's historically interesting to hear what inspired young Britons while most of us were watching the Smurfs. (AT)
Skuld Releases, Malmsheimerstr. 14, 71272 Renningen, Germany

Running Late - Your New Addiction..., CD

Emo rock at its finest: hooks, harmonizing and heartbreak are at the core of this record. If you're a fan of Thursday or Braid, you would most likely be a fan of Running Late. (MG)
Aggravated Music, PO Box 10699, Glendale, CA 91209

Saving Face - Holiday Cruise 365, CD

Honestly, their first CD didn't impress me, but that's what makes this release so amazing. It actually blew me away. This is some of the most addictive, sappy pop-punk I have ever heard. The perfectly placed harmonies between Sarah and Ryan show how much they have grown as musicians during their short history as a band. On top of this impressive release, they are one of the hardest working bands I have ever met, recently returning to Wisconsin from their second West Coast tour in a little over three months, and they're planning to do it all over again very soon. (TK)
Self-released, www.savingfaceband.com

Scaries, The - Law Of Inertia, CD

After a particularly painful breakup, the kind where one person dons stiletto heels to do a jig all over the other's heart, the wounded party usually finds solace in music. Some people listen to miserable mope-rock and wallow in their pain; others instead find upbeat songs that tell of sleepless nights and scorched hearts. With supercharged bounciness, The Scaries fall into the latter category: call it pop-punk for the heartbroken. The running themes throughout these 11 songs are abandonment, loneliness, fear and isolation. Yet their kicky guitar hooks, slick pop melodies, and radio-friendly catchiness are anything but depressive. The title track and "Disappointed" stand out, offering polished and get-stuck-in-your-head twists on the typical melodic punk formula. The other songs are similarly engaging, but the vocals sometimes are

almost too ambitious. With awkward attempts to hit certain high notes, the vocals of "One Way" tend to dip into Chipmunks territory. Then there's the album closer, "Awake," which strips the band's formula down to gentle acoustic guitar. It's an admirable but misplaced experiment. Dear reader, I challenge you not to think of the long-maned Nelson twins while hearing the song's crooning harmonies. (AT)
Law of Inertia, 61 E. Eighth St., #125, New York, NY 10003, www.lawofinertia.com

Secret Channel, The - Over and Over, 7"

New-wavey pop, minus the hairdos and synthesizers, like the soundtrack to an old John Hughes movie. They remind me of the Poster Children or lo-fi Ash at times. Very catchy and talented. Only two songs, but a very promising 7". (NS)
Self-released, www.thesechannel.com

Service Group - Manufacto, 7"

Jangly guitar-pop mania that's total fun for your ears. It's got the Supergrass influence that makes you shake your bootay. (AA)
Squid vs. Whale, PO Box 11252, Portland, OR 97211, www.squidvswhale.com

SFP - Making The Hood Look Good, CD

With this album title, either these guys are big-time geeks or from another country. The latter turns out to be the case, as this is fun, light pop-punk from Belgium. The English lyrics are interesting, both thematically and grammatically, especially the track that questions those who question, "The Ones Who Have It All." (AE)
Eyespy Records, PO Box 89, 9000 Brugge 1, Belgium, www.fade.to/eyespy

Sightings - Audio Dispatch 06, CD

Live performance of experimental noise from Brooklyn. The first few tracks are semi-interesting, guitar-buzzing schmootz, then the drums kick in during later tracks, and it becomes listenable. (AA)
free103point9, 302 Bedford Ave., #261, Brooklyn, NY 11211, www.free102point9.org

Sightings - Michigan Haters, CD

Messed up music with big balls. Eight songs that sound like Big Black taking a dump after eating a "Chili Dog." (BC)
Psycho-Path Records, PO Box 35-1157 Brooklyn, NY 11235

Signal To Trust - Folklore, CD

An artsy band with too many influences. There's way too much going on, and it ain't sounding good. Sounds like the Van Pelt was thrown into a blender with a 100 other bands to create a brown mush, yet the Van Pelt still stands out in all its chunkiness. (MG)
Modern Radio, PO Box 8886, Minneapolis, MN 55408, www.moder-radio.com

Sin Dios - Ingobernables, 12"

This LP was a welcome surprise among the emo-pop madness that tends to make up the bulk of my review pile: a brutal, anti-capitalist Spanish hardcore attack is just what I needed to renew my faith in "current underground music." These Madrid-based folks play some of the best straight-up political hardcore I've heard in ages. Influences span the range of the hardcore spectrum, from the crunching thrash/crust parts to the melodic breakdowns in the vein of Minor Threat. Old school, new school—who the hell cares when such a band can successfully transcend a typical sound by mixing up new and traditional styles? Sin Dios play good hardcore that is both "classic" and original. You've got your gang vocals, your bass-line buildups, and even some sweet rockin' guitar solos! This band rules, hands down. Bonus points for the huge newsprint zine insert, which contains all of the song lyrics (both in English and Spanish) as well as long, thoughtful articles/rants about the evils of the corporate-music industry, prisons and prisoners, European technocracy, and much more. Get this! (MG)
Twisted Chords, Postfach, 76327 Pfingsttal, Germany; Skuld Releases, Malmsheimerstr. 14, 71272 Renningen, Germany

Skit System - Allt E Skit, CD

Politico punk from Eastern Europe (I think). This collection contains mid- to late-'90s songs from two EPs and a split with Wolfpack. It's completely brutal, in-your-face dirt punk that would make a lot of bands cringe. Their sound is tops, but I'll be damned if I know what they're saying. (DM)
Self-released, gotenburgcollapse666@hotmail.com

Skool's Out - After Hours, CD

Twelve neat, tight, catchy, upbeat pop-punk/rock songs. These boys are from Belgium, but they sound like they could be from Orange County, Calif. (BC)
Eye Spy Records, eyespyrules@hotmail.com

Reviewer Spotlight: Kyle Ryan (KR)

Ten Songs That Made Me Punk Rock, Part I. Around age 15, I started to drift away from the industrial music I once loved in favor of a new mistress, punk rock. Here are the first five of 10 songs that ushered in that new era at the beginning of the 1990s (in no particular order): 1) "I'm Not Afraid," Face To Face. I loved this song, still do—so much in fact I named my old zine after it. Amazing melodic punk with one of the best "big guitar" sounds I've ever heard on a record. 2) "In My Eyes," Minor Threat. Yet another private-school-rebellion anthem from the pioneers of hard core. It was perfect for a time in my life where I felt like telling everyone to fuck off: "You tell me that I make no difference / well at least I'm fucking trying / what the fuck have you done?" 3) NOFX, "Nowhere." Although the *punknoscenti* turn their noses up at NOFX, there's no denying the power of their older records. This is a furious melodic punk song indicting the Cold War, which ended before the record was released. 4) Fugazi, "Waiting Room." What's there to explain? 5) Jawbreaker, "Want." I'll never forget the first time I heard this song. It was poppy (but not dopey) and punk with a sensitive edge that knocked me off my feet.

Keepin' It Real: David Cross, *Shut Up, You Fucking Baby!*; David Sedaris box set; Q And Not U, *Different Damage*; J Church, *Palestine*; Jawbox, *My Scrapbook Of Fatal Accidents*



Skulls, The – Therapy For The Shy, CD

This is a reunion full-length release by these supposed "L.A. legends" (did The Skulls ever even put out a record in the '70s?) with only one original member. Fairly generic three-chord punk rock that is catchy, tight and fast—which, I suppose, is how punk rock should be played. (MC)
Dr. Strange, PO Box 1058, Alta Loma, CA 91701

Sloppy Seconds – Destroyed, CD

I had no idea this was out of print. That shows how much it was missed! This remastered (and repackaged) reissue of the 1989 pop-punk classic contains bonus tracks that Metal Blade shelved. Includes the controversial "I Don't Wanna Be A Homosexual" that inspired the brilliant Screeching Weasel parody. (VC)
Coldfront Records, PO Box 8345, Berkeley, CA 94707, www.coldfrontrecords.com

Slowreader – S/T, CD

Slowreader formed from the ashes of Texas band The Impossibles in late 2001. They wear their influences on their sleeves, which isn't a bad thing if you're a fan of electro-tinged, acoustic pop balladry. Listening to this CD is like listening to an Elliott Smith record minus his dark desperation. (JD)
Fueled By Ramen, PO Box 12563, Gainesville, FL 32604, www.fueledbyramen.com

Slut 'Em Go – The Disrespectful Beat, CD

The singer's great Carrie Brownstein-esque voice is a draw, but it makes only rare appearances amid a messy amalgam of directionless instrumental outbursts. They have admirable range, mixing genres from three-chord punk to big hair '80s rock to mature singer-songwriter ditties, but come on, guys, focus. (DAL)
Sarah's Guitar & Repair Shop, www.slutemgo.com

Some Girls – The Rains, 7"

Some Girls limply try to harness the attitude and sound from yesteryear's punk rock (citing punk circa 1979 and Gravity-style San Diego emo circa 1994 as influences). Sadly, this record simply made me want to listen to the original Gravity purveyor of sonic mayhem—Heroin's *Paper Bag 7*—over and over. (JD)
Deathwish Inc., 10 Lothrop St., Beverly, MA 01915, www.deathwishinc.com

Reviewer Spotlight: George B. Sanchez (GBS)

Cadillac Tramps, *Tombstone Radio*. Brian Coakley said he wanted the Cadillac Tramps to be the American Clash. But listening to Coakley's rhythm guitar walk the dog into "Hoodoo Guru," *Tombstone Radio*'s lead track, the Cadillac Tramps are nothing like the Clash. Looking like Cholos, sounding like a tweaker session between Robert Johnson and Stooges guitarist James Williamson, and more volatile than a hot prison yard, the Cadillac Tramps brought the blues to Orange County's early '90s rockabilly punk scene like nobody else. Inspiring hordes of admirers, the Tramps are unsurpassed by any local act. Simple and uncomplicated, *Tombstone Radio* is the Tramps' masterpiece. Drummer Spanky and bassist Warren Renfrow roll the rhythm along tight as clockwork. The twin-guitar approach of Coakley and Johnny Wickersham on Howlin' Wolf's "Killin' Floor" and "Move To The Hills" seamlessly flows like an updated version of the Young Brothers. Then there's Gabby, Mexican-America's ambassador of the blues: huckster smile, preachers promise, and jailhouse tats. Most of the songs off *Tombstone Radio* are staples of the Tramps' live set. But there's a hidden gem: "Graveyard Blues." A vocal harmony among Gabby, Wickersham, and Coakley, this song is rare moment of transparency. The band plays with the reverence and reserve of a pallbearer toasting a lost friend after the funeral. Unlike the urgent announcement his guitar makes on "Shake!" and "Miles Away," Wickersham's lead is subtle, soaring like a Sunday Gospel. A hard-luck story, but not just another hard luck story—like the best blues, "Graveyard Blues" leaves you smiling. And like the crossroads legend, this record is nearly a ghost. If the band's dysfunctional relationship and Gabby's prison stints weren't bad enough, *Tombstone Radio*'s label, Doctor Dream, bit the dust. But don't count the Tramps out. To quote Gabby, "Baby done left me once..."

Tambien en La Casa: The Atomic Men, *Live at KUCI 88.9*; R.L. Burnside: *A Asspocket Of Whiskey*; The Dirty City Brothers, *A Red Diamond*.

Sonic Tallywacker – Swallow The Leader, CD

Hardcore rock 'n' roll in the vein of Antiseen, but a little less aggressive. While it isn't overly creative or original, rock it does. Guitar solos, mean drums and shared vocal duties meet that southern-rock influence, and chaos ensues. (BN)
Regal Beagle Records, PO Box 13, Frostburg, MD 21532, www.regalbeagle.com

♂ Sourvein – Will to Mangle, CD

According to the humorous and poorly written press release from Southernlord Records, Sourvein has a sordid past and a long list of styles and band members. The have toured with Anal Cunt, Eyehategod, The Candy Snatchers, Buzzoven, and High on Fire. They play a sludgy stoner-rock that reminds me of older Sleep releases. The ear-pounding record was produced by Billy Anderson, who also produced High On Fire, The Melvins, and Eyehategod, all genremates of Sourvein. I went to see these guys at Dante's in downtown Portland, but they didn't show up, so I was stuck paying \$8 to hear a local cock-rock band. Despite my disappointment, I drove home and played this CD in my stereo as loud as it could go, closing my eyes and imagining how amazing the show would have been. This is ear torture (in a good way) at its finest! (TK)
Southernlord Records, PO Box 291967, Los Angeles, CA 90029, www.southernlord.com

♂ Spitalfield – The Cloak And Dagger Club, CDEP

Spitalfield are a very promising young foursome out of Dupage, Ill., who play a respectable brand of poppy, Get Up Kidsian emotional rock. Unlike most of the bands that run the gamut of the emo-pop genre these days, Spitalfield are talented musicians and sharp songwriters, and somehow they manage to rise far above the hordes of Jimmy Eat World/Weezer/Get Up Kids copycat bands. They've molded a sound that is catchy and loveable, rather than typical and annoying. Five hook-laden, energetic tracks are on this CD, full of jagged guitar interplay and thoughtful lyrics about lost love and the like. The individual songs range from pure, bouncy pop to slow-tempo, heart-wrenching dirges (adding an element of darkness to balance out the sugary parts). I can even hear some slight hardcore influences tucked deep within, which is

refreshing. This band is headed somewhere great. Get to know them. (MG)
Sinister Label, PO Box 1178, LaGrange, IL 60526, www.sinisterlabel.com

♂ Spits, The – S/T, CD

At first listen, I was absolutely annoyed by everything this band did: the monosyllabic, monotone vocals about drinking and fighting; the obnoxious keyboards not venturing far from the guitar riffs. I just didn't get it. Then the simplistic genius slowly sunk in, and I fell in love. It was right at the intro of the fourth song I decided this was the best pseudo-rock 'n' roll CD I have heard since I discovered Turbonegro. Falling somewhere in between early street punk, wacky new wave, and catchy rock 'n' roll, it can be enjoyed on some level by everyone. If you are into zany-simple-drunk-stupid-punk-rock 'n' roll, this is not to be overlooked. (TK)
Slovenly Recordings, PO Box 204, Reno, NV 89504, www.slovenly.com

Spring, The – The Apocalypse Wow!, CDEP

Like many young new bands, The Spring draw from a multitude of influences. Songs are a little pop, a little punk, a little sludge rock. It's not the most original sound, but they win points for having a song called "Thora Birch." Self-released and available for free via their website. (JD)
Self-released, 4321 N. Tripp #1E, Chicago, IL 60641, www.thespringmusic.com

Stars As Eyes – Enemy Of Fun, CD

An unconstrained journey through lush musical landscapes where strings, pianos, samples, loops, guitars, and drums unite to lull you into a relaxed state. *Enemy Of Fun* is instrumental pop with a curious emo aftertaste, better explained as Aphex Twin meets the Applesseed Cast. (BN)
Tigerbeat6 Music, PO Box 460922, San Francisco, CA 460922, www.tigerbeat6.com

Staying At Home – These Moments Minutes, CD

Jumping from emotional hardcore to straight-up thrash at times, these guys play a multifaceted mix of music. Some of the vocals are sung, and others are screamed off-key. It all turns out to be a very impressive mix, worthy of attention from fans into Boy Sets Fire and Penfold. (TK)
Humble Pie, PO Box 191 Balmain NSW 2041, Australia

Stereo Total – Musique Automatique, CD

This novelty electronic duo blend French pop and minimal krautrock styles, producing a strange brand of loungey synth rock full of dance grooves and weird samples. Sweet female vocals tell an adorable little story in each song. Cute, catchy and most likely unlike anything you've heard before. (MG) Kill Rock Stars, 120 NE State Ave., PMB 418, Olympia, WA 98501, www.killrockstars.com

Stereotyperider- Same Chords. Same Songs. Same Six Strings, CD

Listening to this brings back memories of the mid-to late '90s Dr. Strange catalog. I'm sure that's part due to the fact that this includes former members of Man Dingo. This is great punk rock and happens to be one of those CDs that start to itch after the initial listen. The next thing you know, you're playing with it every day. Watch it, you'll go blind! (JG) Suburban Home Records, PO Box 40757, Denver, CO 80204, www.suburbanhomerecords.com

Stevens, Brandon– The Person With The Telescope Is Me, CDEP

If you're not getting tired of emo kids turning to acoustic guitars, then you will love this four-song solo piece from Brandon Stevens of 30 Lincoln. (EA) Exit Stencil Recordings, PO Box 110775, Cleveland, OH 44111, www.brandon-stevens.com

Stockholm Syndrome, The – The Death of Time, CD

At times it sounds like a less creative version of the Minutemen, with excessive effects drowning out the guitars. Other times it sounds like "Boys Don't Cry" era Cure. A very odd combination, and I think I would have liked it more with fewer guitar effects and more eerie keyboards. (TK) Vegas, PO Box 45, Mirfield WF14 9YQ, W Yorks, England

Strapped To A Rocket - Forget The Fireworks, CD

Maybe indie rock's future is a return to its punk-rock roots. Strapped To A Rocket play very aggressive and energetic indie rock with dumb song names like "How To Isolate An Isotope." They have a nice, full sound that distinguishes them from many of their indie peers. (AE) Squirrel Records, www.i-hostingsolutions.net/Portfolio/StrappedToARocket/

Reviewer Spotlight: Andy Slob (AS)

Red Rockers, *Condition Red*. Some things you just never forget, like the first punk-rock comp tape someone makes for you. Although I can't remember the name of the guy who made mine, I can almost recite word for word every lyric on it. One of the tracks on that tape was "Grow Up" by the Red Rockers. For years (pre-eBay), I searched for this album only to find one comp track and their two severely watered-down major-label releases. (They had a minor hit.) Then a couple of years ago, I finally picked up a reasonably priced copy of the holy grail, *Condition Red*. (I've only seen two copies in about 40,000 hours of record shopping.) From the stammering riff of the opening track, "Guns Of Revolution," it was if the gods had descended upon my turntable. This New Orleans band pounded out the energetic punk-rock classics one after another, living up to their billing as "the American Clash"—nonstop fiery guitar work and some of the catchiest songs ever laid to tape. "Dead Heroes," for example, is a downright classic and timely now, with America in the throes of patriotic idiocy. Too bad they jumped ship to Sellout Land and made two albums that I urge you to avoid. But it's nice to see a band make a classic before going for the pie in the sky, which doesn't seem to happen anymore. And in their words, "I don't care what you say / you know what I think / you bastard you!"

Things that have made me happy lately: Pavement's *Slanted And Enchanted* reissue; the *American Movie* DVD (DIY to the max!); and Neil Young's *Cocaine Eyes*.

Subtracttozero – S/T, 12"

Two songs. No, it's not a DJ record, just looonnnngggg. Patience is a virtue, and you're going to need it for this noisy, heavy hard core with tons of parts. Although the songs seem to lead into each other, they still feel tedious. (KR) Primary Thoughts, PO Box 4995, PDX, OR 97208, www.primarythoughts.com

♫ Suffering And The Hideous Thieves/ The Hush Hush – split, CD

The reasoning behind making this two-band 10-song split into a double CD is beyond me, but I'm not here to review their logic. The Hush Hush is very slow and heartfelt music played with acoustic guitar, melodica, viola, and keyboards, and despite the annoyingly simplistic layout of this CD, the music is beautiful, slow and sad. The harmonizing vocals of Amy Carlsen and Anita Perkins float above the music, and this would be perfect to play when trying to drift off to sleep. Word is that The Hush Hush will be changing to a more hard-core style in the future, but these five songs are far from it. Suffering and The Hideous Thieves sounds very similar to the Elliott record *False Cathedrals*. Both bands play heartfelt music that epitomizes sadness. If you enjoy that, get some tissues, and pick up this release. The tears will come soon after. (TK) Lujo Records, 3209 Jennie Drive, Morgan City, LA 70380, www.lujorecords.com

Sure! Conflict! – Blind, CDEP

Catchy punk rock from this Dutch band that sounds like a cross between Leatherface and old Social Distortion. Heartfelt lyrics and nice upbeat tempos. Some songs get a little slower and showcase some great songwriting. Seven songs, one sung in Dutch, the rest in English. Worth searching out. (NS) Dark, kloosterstraat 46, 8603 XJ SNEEK, the Netherlands, www.darkincorporated.com

Switzer, Bert - 1977-2002, CD

Interesting "solo album" collection by a great Boston drummer, best known for his time in the Jabbers-sounding '70s punk band The Destroyed. This CD showcases Switzer's amazing drumming and makes some rare Destroyed recordings available (including some fantastic live tracks). This CD is a wild retro treat. (AE) Self-released, www.bertswitzer.com

♫ Templars - Phase II, CD

"DON'T NEED YOUR RELIGION! DON'T NEED YOUR LAWS! DON'T NEED YOUR SYSTEM AND ALL OF ITS FLAWS! WE WANT THE CHANCE AND WE WANT A SAY! WE WANT IT NOW, WE'RE THE KIDS OF TODAY!" Still available on vinyl from Vulture Rock as of this writing, GMM reissued 1998's *Phase II* on CD with cool horror movie artwork on the cover and unparalleled distribution for what has to be the best active oi band. Carl Templar, singer/guitarist No. 1, teaches out West, and a new fourth member of the band lives in Atlanta. But they still manage to play out sometimes, and their shows are a brilliant extension of their recorded legacy. In an overwhelmingly negative and mean genre, The Templars shine as a very positive force. The lyrics are inspirational and revolutionary (see above), and the simple, undistorted guitars often sound more like '90s grrl band riffs than traditional oi. It's a fucking travesty that punk is so segmented that most people into some form of it haven't even heard these geniuses. I'd buy GMM's reissue of The Templars' first LP, *Return of Jacques De Molay* before buying *Phase II*, but both are essential. Oi not soy! (AE) GMM Records, PO Box 15234, Atlanta, GA 30333, www.gmmrecords.com

Templars – Return Of Jacques De Molay, CD

I think this is a rerelease of their first record. The oi band that rocks with both electric and acoustic guitar work. Give this a listen. (BC) GMM Records, PO Box 15234, Atlanta, GA 30333

Ten Volt Shock / Neighbour Rosicky – split, 7"

The accompanying press release promises "a clash of everything what keeps us sweating." And sure, I suppose if you danced to this record, you might need some Lady Mitchum. Ten Volt Shock is proficient in the language of noise rock, while Neighbour Rosicky adds a bit of '70s rock to round things out. (AT) Kopist-Platten, www.kopist-platten.de

Theseloh – Nice International, CD

Ten mostly light, melodic tunes that come off of this New York band's third release. Intriguing guitar work and different vocal styles keep it interesting. (BC) KOA Records, www.koarecords.com

They Fought Back. - Resist, CD

The personal is political is pretty darn good in this debut. Its eight tracks are powerfully dissonant, with alternately snarling and melodic female vocals



over jagged, noisy guitar. Smart lyrics, fierce energy, and a Poly Styrene-meets-Fugazi sound make this one original and surprising. (AT)
87 Records, 214 Ogden Ave., Jersey City, NJ 07307, www.87rx.com

Thumbs Down – Motion, CDEP

Old-school hardcore from Belgium. Five tracks here that are pretty weak. Guess which way my thumb's pointing? (JG)
Eye Spy Records, PO Box 89, 8000 Brugge 1, Belgium, www.fade.to/eyespy.com

♫ Tiger Army- Early Years EP, CDEP

A six-song collection of previously unreleased Tiger Army material containing the group's hard to find first 7". Unless you're a fan, this EP's not very exciting. A blend of '50s rockabilly, English psychobilly, and anthemic street punk, the EP, in comparison with later albums, points to Tiger Army's stagnant musical growth over the years. The first two tracks are standard Tiger Army: three chords, slap bass, drums, and superficial lyrics of frustration and alienation. The second third is a pair of covers: Eddie Cochran's "Twenty Flight Rock" and the Misfits "American Nightmare." Neither is a surprise, nor deviates much from the original recordings. The EP concludes with demo versions of "F.T.W." and "Nocturnal." Nick 13's guitar playing relies on simple bar chords and repetitious depressions of the whammy bar. Joel Day's stand-up bass is muffled, and Adam Carson's drums are buried in the mix. Like mid-'90s pop punk in the mainstream, Tiger Army has been paraded as something new and original. It's neither. But 13's voice—soft, sexy, and at times a cool croon—is unavoidably Tiger Army's greatest asset and saving grace. Dammit, he *does* sound good covering the Misfits. (GBS)
Hellcat Records, 2798 Sunset Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90026, www.hell-cat.com

Tommy And The Terrors – On The Run, 7"

The zombie grabbing the guitar from beyond the grave on the sleeve led me to expect some sort of Misfits knock-off, but these guys blast a thoroughly upbeat brand of three-chord punk with a hint of oi. Nice hooks, good energy—not bad for a bunch of Massholes. (DAL)
TKO Records, 3216 W. Cary St. #303, Richmond, VA 23221, www.tkorecords.com

Reviewer Spotlight: Jillian Steinberger (JS)

Raincoats, Raincoats. In June 1980, *Trouser Press*' John Lydon wrote bluntly, "I think music has reached an all-time low—except for the Raincoats." Greil Marcus wrote in the July 24, 1980, edition of *Rolling Stone*, "The Raincoats leapt into their first number. Within a minute, they seemed to have trashed every female stereotype in rock and roll. In front of an audience, they are moved to give full play to all the wit, brains, anger and affection they have in them. ... I was amazed." In 1992, Kurt Cobain sainted the Raincoats in *Incesticide*'s liner notes. And it's all true—they were that good. The English avant-garde folk-punk-popsters were refined and raw, symphonic and stripped down—and always pogo-etic. Their cover of "Lola," more queer and blood-stirring than the Kinks' original, is loaded with innocent, hungry desire. (Check out Portuguese lead singer/guitarist/keyboardist Ana Da Silva's "Nico-meets-Frankenstein" vocals.) Off-kilter girl harmonies from bassist Gina Birch and violinist/guitarist Vicky Aspinall are incredible against unusual rhythms punctuated by Slit's founder Palmolive's electrifying drums. On the other 10 classic originals, all members contributed disjointed lyrics probing the ontology of love, as on the uptempo "Black And White" ("Is it love when I fear you talking to me / And discover it was just a longing?"). Crazy sax from X-Ray Spex's Lora Logic explodes like an off-the-hook garden hose while constantly changing drum parts form odd yet infectious rhythms. On top of it all are wild, cascading guitars. Put on the Raincoats, any time and in all weather!

What's on the carousel? Jets To Brazil, *Perfecting Loneliness*; Stereo Total, *Musique Automatique*; Tracker, *Polk*; Flaming Lips, *Yoshimi Battles the Pink Robots*; Julian Cope, *20 Mothers*.

Tora! Tora! Torrance! - Get Into It, CD

The White Stripes gone psychedelic with tasteful posthardcore breakdowns—it sounds questionable, but that didn't stop these nu-garage hyper rockers from pushing what sounds like pure pubescent adrenaline. The lyrics are a refrigerator magnet smattering of "Luv! Yeah! Hot!" I can't help but heckle, "No! Stop! Please!" (VC)
The Militia Group, 7923 Warner Ave., Suite K, Huntington Beach, CA 92647, www.themilitia-group.com

Torg – Hot Yogurt Enema, CD

The self-proclaimed "worst band in the world" play some gritty punk rock with songs titled "Electropussy," "Cough Syrup," "Too Much Fiber," and "Burping Up Barf." Beavis and Butthead would raise the Devil Horns for these songs, which could only be matched by the lullabies my mother used to sing to me. (DM)
Clambake Records, www.torg.cc

Tracer – Darker Days Lie Ahead, CD

This is reminiscent of mid-'90s post-HC, pre-emo type punk. Not really leaning toward any genre, Tracer has that faster, up-tempo Fat Wreck sound with attempts at singing. They also have crunchier guitars instead of that stern, harder sound attached to post-HC/emo. Hard to define, easy to listen to. (DM)
Self-released, www.traceron-line.com

♫ Tracker – Polk, CD

With grace, beauty and impact, this hypnotic album is something special. Overall, the midtempo music paints a lush yet mysterious landscape. It's a groovy combination of acoustic/Americana (there's pedal steel) and ambient/electronic, plus pretty melodic guitars paired with downbeat, off-kilter drums. Singer Josh Askew's whispered vocals are intriguing yet gentle, and he's gathered much talent in his studio. Matt Ward (aka solo artist M. Ward) plays organ on one song, "Great Sea (It Sank Me)." Death Cab for Cutie's Michael Shorr, an old friend of Askew's, plays drums on several tracks—but this is *not* emo. Tracker is altogether different. The band has toured extensively with opening slots for bands like Thingy and Calxico, and this release shows why they're ready to headline. The cover art, featuring aerial photography and ground shots, is elegant. Two thumbs up for this gush-worthy music and its wrapping. (JS)
Film Guerrero, PO Box 14414, Portland, OR, 97293, www.filmguerrero.com/tracker

♫ Tracy + The Plastics - Forever Sucks EP, CDEP

Electronic dance music piloted by Wynne Greenwood of Olympia, Wash., the *Forever Sucks* EP is a collection of five catchy songs that bounce between nu-disco rhythms and electronic experimentation a la Le Tigre. The confrontational lyrics of "Best Of The '70s, '80s, and '90s" take a backseat to the song's rolling bass thump that builds like hours of foreplay. Sexy and strong, "Destroyer" shimmers like a New Order dance beat while Greenwood's voice waivers like a banshee wail. Teasingly, "My Friends End Parties" cuts off in the middle of the track—leaving you craving more and wondering what the hell this means. Constructed as an attempt "to destroy the hierarchical dynamics of mass media's say/see spaces," this experiment means little in the confines of a bedroom stereo and earphones. But the soundtrack to Greenwood's test is wonderfully exciting. The drum samples and bass lines can get monotonous, but the EP's too quick to induce boredom. Fans of Errase Errata and Le Tigre may already know, but Tracy + The Plastics have delivered a spicy new record that bumps and grinds with liberating howls of laughter and offers an exciting, danceable release. (GBS)
Chainsaw, PO Box 1151, Olympia, WA 98507-1151, www.chainsaw.com

♫ Transplants – Transplants, CD

Tim Armstrong is back, with Travis Barker of Blink-182 and newcomer Rob Aston, showcasing his latest project: an unusual fusion of rock, hip-hop, electronica, punk and even funk. Over-the-top lyrics, including scathing social commentary and honest appraisal of the scene in general, are backed by an impressive wall of noise. Armstrong amazes with his thick guitar sound and the use of a bass guitar and extensive loops. Travis Barker breaks out of the Blink's shadow and lays down some badass drum tracks. Ron Aston comes out of nowhere to lend his tough-guy vocals, both with his singing and rapping. Together, they present an unhindered collection of genre-breaking cuts that, hopefully, are only the tip of the iceberg. Truth is the Transplants might just help break the barrier that commercial radio and MTV placed over the punk scene in recent years. This is an essential

record and a reminder of what being punk really means. Sure, they'll take some shit from the jaded punk purists, but all pioneers do. In the end, you can either make history or follow those that had balls. (BN)

Hellcat Records, 2798 Sunset Blvd. Los Angeles, CA 90026, www.hell-cat.com

♪ Trash Brats – American Disaster, CD

These hideous-looking, cross-dressing rockers will forever remain one of the most misunderstood bands in America. There are some outstanding cuts here, such as "Rocket To Heaven" and "Must Be The Cocaine," that are on par with anything that Electric Frankenstein has ever put out, while "Who Put The Words In Your Mouth" is a great, infectious pop-rock song. The rest of the album is a cross-breeding of the Rolling Stones and Cheap Trick's power pop. But with the Brats getting on in years and their music and trashed glam look lifting a big middle finger to their hometown Detroit's neo-garage scene, the kids will unfortunately never take notice. (AS)

Storm Records, PO Box 151, Royal Oak, MI 48068, www.stormrecords.com

Travoltas – Endless Summer, CD

This is the sixth full-length from these veteran pop-punkers from Holland. Relegated to eighth-stage billing at this past summer's Warped Tour, The Travoltas are still largely unknown in the U.S. despite a huge European following. Beatnik Termites fans take notice: This rules. (AE)

Fastmusic Label, PO Box 206512, New Haven, CT 06520, www.fastmusic.com

Tri-City Thundercats, The – Technology Makes Me Sleepy, 7"

Five songs of sloppy, Midwestern-style garage rock with a strong R&B/Mod influence. The production is murky and muddled, making it hard to decipher the lyrics. Think a low-fi version of the Street Walkin' Cheetahs. THUNDERCATS HOOOOO!!! (GBS) I Don't Feel A Things Records, PO Box 858, Tempe, AZ 85280

Tusk – Get Ready, CD

Intense, furious, driving grind from Evanston, Ill. Even though the cover was a little misleading (it looked like Rush), it's good, and the song titles are fucking great: "A Animal Has a Nice Day," "Six-Act Descent to the Lower Reaches," and "Dracula Dragon Trick" were my favorites. (TK) He Who Corrupts, 196 Fairfield, Elmhurst, IL

Reviewer Spotlight: Miss Annie Tomlin (AT)

Native Nod, *Today Puberty, Tomorrow the World*. Whenever I'm feeling like a grizzled old lady, I turn to the music that got me through high school. (Call it a Pavlovian response, but it works.) Native Nod's discography is the record that most makes me feel young and energetic. What's remarkable about the band is its groundbreaking sound and the imprint it left. Although its members were only teenagers, their music helped to redefine punk and hardcore in the mid-'90s. Before emo was a marketing buzzword, it described music that truly was emotional and meaningful—and Native Nod was nothing if not those things. In songs like "Bread" and "Lower C.I. Bleed," abrasive bursts of energy are unexpected, but never out of place. Through Chris Leo's trademark combination of yelping and speaking, the lyrics gain a sense of urgency, of importance, of immediacy. During their short time together, Native Nod managed to capture the torment and intensity of youth. Seven years after the release of *Today Puberty, Tomorrow the World*, these songs retain that emotion. I hope I'm still listening to them when I really am an old lady.

Things that have made the daily grind tolerable: Mexican hot chocolate; Henry Mancini; the Buzzcocks; humantorch.diaryland.com; and track two from Guitar's new full-length.

60126, www.hewhocorrupts.com

Tvfordogs – Heavy Denver, CD

Standard alternative rock fare that fits right in with major alternative radio. Sounds like a bunch of those nameless, faceless bands I used to hear in the mid-'90s, after that whole grunge thing blew over (Bush? Stone Temple Pilots?). (MC) Wampus Multimedia, www.wampus.com

♪ 2 Cents Worth – American Bread & Circus, CD

With their melodic midtempo rhythms, 2 Cents Worth sounds similar to the older, slower, Atlantic Records-era Bad Religion. Warm, overdriven guitar tones play while Mark's lead vocals come across cool, collected, and slightly raspy (not unlike Greg Gaffin). Lyrically, 2 Cents Worth focuses on the over-commodification of contemporary culture ("Wal-Mart Stole Our Scene"), political co-optation, good ol' days sentimentality, and being middle-aged in a youth subculture—and there's a cover of the *Buffy The Vampire Slayer* theme. Later, the band attacks zine writers on "Your Band Sucks (and so does your whole family)": "I got this free CD today and boy does it suck / They probably want a good review / Well they're out of luck / They're kind of sloppy and they sing off key / What made them think they were punk anyway?" Mark later chides, "I'm so brilliant and self-important / That's why I write for this little fanzine." Mark with no last name, why would you, so seemingly self-assured in age and experience, make such a petty attack and then send the record out to zines for publicity? Sigh—looks like 2 Cents Worth has some issues to work out. I, a "self-important" zine writer, wish them the best. (GBS)

AVD Records, 8370 W. Cheyenne, Box 109-22, Las Vegas, NV 89129, www.avdrecords.com

Unknown Soldiers – If I Were God, CD

Picture and more nasal version of Joy Division's Ian Curtis singing over loose, metallish rock with lots of solos. Cheesy and bad in pretty much every regard. The poor recording, which makes the guitars sound flat and tinny, doesn't help, either. Suggested title: *If I Were Good*. (KR) Funhouse, PO Box 10509, Portland, OR 97210

♪ Unit Pride – Then and Now, CD

This is a compilation of reissues from San Francisco's classic straight-edgers. It features material that's been unavailable for more than 10 years, including their long out of print *Then and Now 7"* and the obscure *Holding On Strong* demo. Against their roiling, hook-laden hardcore, it's

apparent that they had thought through the issues troubling their generation. Their anthemic good-and-good-for-you punk rock was led by screecher Eric Ozenne, later of Redemption 87 and the Nerve Agents. He gets his message across with fierce energy and raw power. Some titles are "Friendship," "Making a Difference," "Straight Ahead" and "One Will Do" ("I'll work my hardest, whatever it takes / I may not be successful with the world / But that one soul would make my day / I may not destroy their problems and fears / But if I reach just one, one will do"). With the pure message underlying Unit Pride's simple, decipherable, and pointed lyrics, the music is simultaneously visceral, challenging and relevant today. (JS)

Mankind Records, PO Box 265, Bellflower, CA 90707, mankindrec@aol.com

Unsilent Reign – Strangers Amongst Ourselves, CD

If youth-crew singalongs and dueling metallic growls had a love child, this is what its cries would sound like. This competent Florida band plays angry, idealistic, and brash hardcore. More windmill-worthy breakdowns would be nice, but there's plenty to appease the fingerpointing impulses within. (AT) Too Damn Hype, PO Box 63524, Philadelphia, PA 19147, www.toodamnhype.com

♪ Vandals, The – Internet Dating Superstuds, CD

It's hard to believe how long these guys have been singing mindless songs about farting, belching, dead girlfriends and body parts. No, the Vandals will never be called "complex" or "poetic," and it's extremely doubtful that anyone will ever refer to this as the soundtrack of their life, but many will still listen. Why? Because it's fucking fun, ya dweeb. There is no denying the fact that the Vandals are all very talented musicians; the songs are tight, clean, and catchy as hell. Dave's quirky vocal style grows on you with each listen, and the lyrics are always entertaining. Think of the Vandals much like you would an Adam Sandler movie. Yeah, it can be silly and extremely immature, but in the end you're likely to find yourself laughing time and again. It's simply fucking fun, like I already told ya. (BN)

Kung Fu Records, PO Box 38009, Hollywood, CA 90038, www.kungfurecords.com

Varistor – 07.28.02, CD

Varistor is a landmark in art-rock pretension in that they augment the "no bassist" gimmick by adding a bass string to a guitar. Why not just add a



bassist? This mopey, well-recorded full-length is entirely devoid of the class and dynamism it clearly strives for. (AE)

Hey Frankie Recordings, PO Box 090629, Brooklyn, NY 11209, www.heyfrankie.com

Verusian Skyline—Twilight Songs, CDEP

While successfully creating a Doors aesthetic, the refreshing instrumentation is too detail-ridden, and the vocals fall flat. Interludes of spacey piano-laced ethereal atmosphere remind me of Pink Floyd—in a very bad way. Less wank and more focus on emotion would make a contender. (VC)

Undecided Records, 10695 Lake Oak Way, Boca Raton, FL 33498, www.undecidedrecords.com

Vets, The – S/T, CD

With a heavy jazz influence and experimental leanings, this threesome twists the normal emo conventions into a big wad, where playing ability and ingenuity far outshine the vocals. It's a love 'em or hate 'em kind of band, which is the way it should be. (AS)

Modern Radio, PO Box 8886, Minneapolis, MN 55408, www.modern-radio.com

What Feeds The Fire – Set Me Free, 7"

With its great faux-matchbook design and excellent-sounding record waiting inside, this 7" sure was a surprise: livid hardcore packed with earsplitting drums, deafening guitar riffs, tough vocals, and catchy choruses. It's melodic without being wimpy, like a cross between Strike Anywhere and Coalesce. (BN)

Anchor Records, PO Box 154, 3495 Cambie St., Vancouver, BC V5Z 4R3, Canada, www.anchorrecords.com

Whiskey Rebels – S/T, CD

Whiskey Rebels from Sacramento arrive on the scene with this release, the sort of debut album that makes legends. They play mainline oi, with a modern Dropkick Murphys feel sans the overproduction oi releases are beginning to employ. This stellar young band shall endure. (AE)

GMM Records, PO Box 15234, Atlanta, GA 30333, www.gmmrecords.com

Whore Daddy-O's, The – Good Drugs Bad Girls, 7"

Cool and fun punk rockabilly stuff from the cheese capital of Wisconsin. Six songs on one 7". (BC)

Self-released, hordadio@aol.com

Written in the Sand – 47 Ursae Majoris, CD

Written in the Sand is described as "synth-driven, sci-fi themed pop rock," and indeed they do sound sort of like a cross between Stereolab and Man...Or Astroman? What I really like about them is that, while this type of music could easily fall into a syrupy kind of easy-to-like, easy-to-forget laziness, they propel it forward at light speeds with frenetic drumming and strategically placed glockenspiels. This record would be great to play

in the background for your low-key get-together or when you're battling a giant squid on Neptune, but end up calling a truce and treating the squid to a martini. (DAL)

Johann's Face Records, PO Box 479164, Chicago, IL 60647, www.johannsface.com

Zinn, Howard – Artists In A Time Of War, CD

Howard Zinn reflects on how wartime dissent is not merely the province of "experts," then relates some favorite snippets of anti-war pieces by 20th century authors. Zinn is certainly a national treasure, but this falls flat. A stronger record would have collected original recordings from the authors themselves. (DAL)

AK Press, 674-A 23rd St., Oakland, CA 94612-1163

Zoli Band – ...Live At The M.O.D., 12"

Take the lead singer of a hardcore band, stick him in a midtempo rock outfit, and you'll come up with Zoli Band. Featuring Zoli Teglas of Ignite on vocals, this is the emcore version of Pearl Jam. This recording captures them live in Belgium and sounds good, all things considered. (BN)

R3 Records, Diesterstraat 6, 3290 Molenstede-Diest, Belgium

V/A - Barricaded Suspects, CD

This is a reissue of a rare 1983 hardcore singles collection from the old Pomona-based Toxic Ranch label. Includes such notables as Red Tide, The Dull, and Roach Motel. Most of the bands play undated, fast, old-school hardcore. This is a fun educational tool/history lesson for the young. (AE)

Dr. Strange Records, PO Box 1058, Alta Loma, CA 90701, www.drstrange.com

V/A – Champion Sampler, CD

Finally, a label sampler that doesn't suck. Seventeen tracks of simplistic pop music that veers in all sorts of directions, from folk to punk to new wave. It's all done in a fun, but cool, simple Beat Happening (minus the rockabilly and baritone) or Shonen Knife (minus the happiness) kind of way. (AS)

High School Champion, PO Box 86003-670, Bloor Street West, Toronto, Ontario Canada M6G 1L0, www.highschoolchampion.com

V/A - (Coles) Notes From Underground, CD

This is a four-way split featuring Marilyn's Vitamins, Closet Monster, Protest The Hero, and Bombs Over Providence. It's a sneaky kick-ass comp, with a nice variety of styles, ranging from emo to fast, melodic hardcore. The bands all have astute, political song titles and lyrics without being preachy. (AE)

Underground Operations, PO Box 13, Ajax Ontario, L1S 3C2, Canada, www.undergroundoperations.com

V/A - Die Has Been Cast, CD

Very nice comp of regional bands, many of whom are from Wisconsin. Most play straightforward, melodic punk and hardcore. High points include: Big Fat Ass,

The Monos, and Stool Sample. Besides Milwaukee, Wisconsin sucks. But it is a state full of talented kids into music. Highly recommended. (AE)

Boxman Records, 3473 N. Bremen St., Milwaukee, WI 53212, www.boxmanrecords.com

♀ V/A - Dropping Food On Their Heads Is Not Enough, CD

Thirty-two bands, individuals, and groups contributed to this CD benefiting the women of Afghanistan. Fifty percent of all proceeds (not profits; there's a difference) will go to the Revolutionary Afghan Women Association and Afghan Women's Mission. Both the thoughtful liner notes and the diversity of styles show that this is an undertaking dear to the hearts of all involved. The big names here—Bouncing Souls, Chumbawamba, Anti-Flag—will entice people to buy the CD, but more than a few of the other bands are less than stellar. Fast-and-sloppy covers (Jack Killed Jill's "You Don't Own Me") and skatting skate punk (Link 80) aren't terrible, but both are quickly becoming compilation clichés. Still, there's a great and compelling diversity in this mix, including Fobia's laid-back hip hop, traditional Afghan women's songs, and Jello Biafra's dry commentary on Bin Laden and Bush. As a whole, the compilation is all over the place, and only a handful of people will fall in love with every single song. That said, it's for an excellent cause, and many bands contributed unreleased material. If there's even one song that interests you here, pick up the compilation to help women in Afghanistan. (AT)

Geykido Comet Records, PO Box 3743, Laguna Hills, CA 92654, www.gcrecords.com

V/A - Experiments In Sonic Reactions, CD

A showcase of the ability to combine CD and MP3 compilations onto one compact disc, *Experiments In Sonic Reactions* is more about technology than music. Without access to a computer or CD-ROM, though, it plays only six songs, including tracks from Sixer, Belvedere, Parker, and Cheswick. It is an interesting concept. (GBS)

Manic Lab Media, 2407 Floyd Ave., #3, Richmond, VA 23220, www.maniclab.com

V/A – Fast Music Compilation, 2002, CD

The first sampler from this Israeli label comes in two parts: half studio recorded, half live. Flavors range from spacey '60s rock (track two) to weird noisy rock (track eight) to melodic punk (tracks five, nine), almost all of it sung in Hebrew. Not bad, but too long for my tastes. (KR)

Fast Music, PO Box 14542, Tel Aviv 61144, Israel

V/A - Fat Music Vol. VI: Uncontrollable Fatulence, CD

The unreleased tracks by Lawrence Arms, Lagwagon, Strung Out, and Rise Against are fucking smokin'! These alone are worth the price of

admission, but you also get great songs by bands like Dillinger Four, Propagandhi, and Sick Of It All. Oh yeah, NOFX too. (JG)
Fat Wreck Chords, PO Box 193690, San Francisco, CA 94119, www.fatwreck.com

V/A - Fighting Music, CD

The first pressing of a whopping 10,000 copies of this hardcore compilation is spreading over the country like wildfire. Includes a nice sampling of today's hardcore sounds from bands like American Nightmare and Throwdown, as well as some great lesser-known bands like Dead Serious. (AE)
Deathwish Inc., 10 Lothrop St., Beverly, MA 01915, www.deathwishinc.com

V/A - Get In The Back With The Dogs!, CD

Thirty-six songs by about 15 bands that all seem to include a Stepe brother. The bands play sloppy punk with goofy lyrics for the most part. I think I like the hardcore songs (especially Negative Element) the best. The recording quality throughout the entire CD is terrible, though. Crappy, yet somewhat endearing. (NS)

Roctober Records, no contact information provided

V/A - Patchwork: A Compilation, CD

This zine-turned-label's first release flows like a great mix tape from a far-away friend. All previously unreleased material from great bands like Seaweed, Superchunk, The White Octave, The Scaries, and Kittitas to name a few. (JG)
Mere Exposure, PO Box 665, Chapel Hill, NC 27514, www.mereexposure.com

V/A - Punch Drunk IV, CD

TKO is one of the few labels I can always count on. Chock full of aggressive, raw rockers from the likes of Electric Frankenstein, Antiseen, and the Forgotten, this latest label sampler is another classic in their catalog. Fast, loud, angry, and raw, it's pure, unapologetic rock 'n' roll. (BN)
TKO Records, 3126 W. Cary St. #303, Richmond, VA. 23221, www.tkorecords.com

V/A - Smash Hits & Licks, CD

This Dim Mak sampler has 20 bands and songs that cover a lot of ground. A lot of great stuff here, so check out the website to see for yourself. (BC)
Dim Mak Records, PO Box 14041, Santa Barbara, CA 93107, www.dimmak.com

V/A - Stayin' at Mike's: A King Bee Comp, CD

Raw and unpretentious, *Stayin' at Mike's* is one of the best compilations to come my way in long time. Pop punk, 7 Seconds-style hardcore, gushingly sappy emo, and some exciting experimental stuff—the comp flows like a mix tape full of unknown gems put together by a good friend. (GBS)
King Bee Records, PO Box 1164, Denver, CO 80201, www.geocities.com/kingbeerecords

V/A - Toxic Shock: Four Old Seven Inches, CD

This is packed with a comp featuring the bands Kent State, Modern Industry, Moslem Birth and Mason Youth and three EPs by Peace Corpse, Red Tide, and the Massacre Guys (with Karl and Stephen from All/Descendents). If you don't know, Toxic Shock helped spread the word of punk back in the day, and this is an awesome collection. Thank you Toxic Shock and Dr. Strange. (DM)

Dr. Strange Records, PO Box 1058, Alta Loma, CA 90701, www.drstrange.com

V/A - Under the Influence: A Tribute To The Smiths, The Clash, & The Cure, CD

What a great idea. Get some cool bands like Murphy's Law, The Business and The Meatmen to cover some great songs from some great bands of the past. (BC)

Too Damn Hype, PO Box 63524, Philadelphia, PA 19147, www.toodamn hype.com

V/A - U.S. of Oi! Vol. 2, CD

This rerelease contains 19 tracks of bands that paved the way for the street punk and the American oi movement: Anti-Heroes, Wretched Ones, Templars, Pist and Broke, United We Stand, and a slew of others. Some of it is pretty raw, but the proof is in the pudding. (DM)

GMM Records, PO Box 15234, Atlanta, GA 30333

♪ V/A - We Will Answer With Questions, CD

This is one of the most thorough hardcore compilations I have listened to in quite a while. I would consider almost every band on this comp a master of their genre: This Computer Kills, Thrice, Ink Cartridge Funeral, The Minus Tide, This Engine Burns, The Eleventh Hour, After School Knife Fight, Taken, The Plot To Blow Up The Eiffel Tower, In Constant Motion, Dasai, and As Hope Dies. I guess most of the bands would be considered more "post-hardcore" or "screamo" than traditional hardcore, but this compilation shows how bands can rise above the boundaries of said genres and create amazing music that is hard to pigeon-hole. This comp wasn't made to show off bands on any one label, but as a group of artists making the scene what it is today. (TK)

This Guy Records, PO Box 25725 Los Angeles, CA 90025, www.thisguyrecords.com; Coldbringer Recordings, PO Box 931174, Los Angeles, CA 90093, www.liquid2k.com/coldbringer_collective

V/A - You Call This Music, CD

More than 35 bands with punk, rock, goofy, metal songs. Hell, it's all here! (BC)
Geykido Comet Records, PO Box 3743, Laguna, CA 92654, www.gcrecords.com

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J CHURCH Palestine

A new CD of all unreleased material recorded as a demo for an unreleased album from back in '97. Includes "Not Proud Of The USA", "State Of Things" and the "Underground trilogy". This CD is a benefit to help pay for the losses from the fire that destroyed most of the band and record label stuff.

\$10 post paid.



DFI self-titled CD

Fourth full length release from Didonato from Illinois. This disc is a genius mixture of the Fucking Champs, Orthrelm, Ween and Fantomas. Even the song titles speak volumes: "Myopic Dystopia", "The Devil May Not Care", "Crystal With A 'K'", and "The Dudes Are Stoked".

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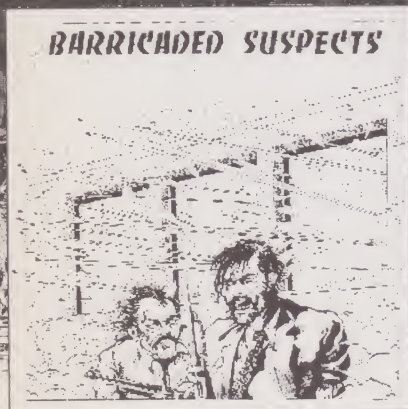
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by Sam Green & Peter Simon

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004 MYSTERIOUS OBJECT AT NOON

by Benjamin Svetkey

A true opportunity about a totally fading indie band that you will never see live in a club. Friends of the band play live in the living room of a friend's house. The album is a collection of 15 tracks, including a live performance by the band. The DVD features 15 minutes of extra footage and a commentary by Benjamin Svetkey.



005 FRIENDS FOREVER

by Ben Weisman

A true opportunity about a totally fading indie band that you will never see live in a club. Friends of the band play live in the living room of a friend's house. The album is a collection of 15 tracks, including a live performance by the band. The DVD features 15 minutes of extra footage and a commentary by Ben Weisman.



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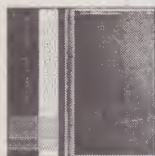


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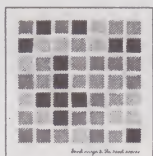
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The Braves debut album, *That's The Hot Part*, showcases the members years of playing in various rock bands and lets shine through the bands fine tuned knack for crafting a song in the grand tradition. This album is asking to be placed on the indie rock pedestal alongside the likes of "Propellers" by Guided By Voices, "Harmacy" by Sebadoh, or "May I Sing With Me" by Yo La Tengo.

Twinstar "Dovetailing" CD

Format: CD
Price: \$10 ppd.
Cat.#: JBR003



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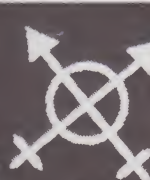
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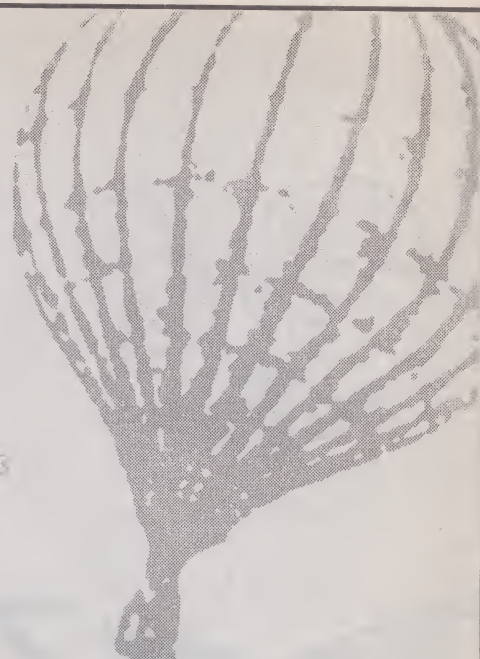
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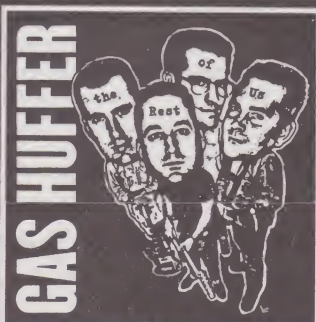
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zines

THIS ISSUE'S REVIEWERS: Reviewers: Amy Adoyzie (AA), Joe Biel (JB), Vincent Chung (VC), Jen Dolan (JD), Dan Laidman (DAL), Patrick Sayers (PS), Claire Sewell (CS)

Altercation #9

I can't stand it when ad content is indistinguishable from the interviews. With a name like *Altercation*, I'd hope they'd pick fights with their subjects or be more confrontational. The band selection follows good hype, with Sleater-Kinney, Black Heart Procession, Flaming Lips, Bright Eyes, Mudhoney and more. (VC)

\$3.50, PO Box 34, Hurley, NY 12443, altercation@altercation.net

American Music Press (AMP) #1

This tremendously enjoyable freshmen effort starts right out of the gate as California's largest underground free regional publication. *AMP* boasts above-average writing, a cool format (columns are interspersed among articles, clippings and interviews), and an awesome overall positive attitude. Features news, reviews, and the seemingly omnipresent Dag Nasty interview. (JD)

Free, PO Box 1070, Martinez, CA 94553, www.ampmagazine.com

AMP Magazine #2

I can't understand why someone would want to publish another glossy music magazine. It's not that this isn't one of the best I've seen, or they don't have a good understanding of punk music, it's just that I don't see the need. Anyway, it's free, but it's still killing trees. (JB)

\$3, PO Box 4442 Berkeley, CA 94704, www.ampmagazine.com

◆Bitch #18

Bitch's subtitle is "A Feminist Response to Pop Culture," and that seems to be a good description of this issue's contents. The letters cover both sides of the argument surrounding the Michigan Women's Music Festival in an intelligent (and somewhat confusing) manner. I appreciated the

fact that there were positive articles as well as negative ones—that seems to be an increasing problem in counterculture. People only criticize and forget to reinforce the positive aspects of things. The most entertaining parts for me were the smaller articles criticizing a specific product or a company's ad campaign, such as a weight-loss product called Anorex or Gene Simmons' *Tongue* magazine. It's all very frustrating to see how much blatantly sexist and hateful advertising exists in this world. My only real complaint here is the layout—or lack of it. Visually, nothing brought me in to read the articles. Of course once I started reading, I was rather consumed by the contents. But if I were just flipping through this on a newsstand, I would pass because it's just not visually gripping enough to hold my attention. (JB)

\$5, 2765 16th St., San Francisco, CA 94103, www.bitchmagazine.com

◆Blackthorn #2

Blackthorn refers to itself as "an overview of radical DIY culture," and thankfully it's just that. This paper features articles on DIY home brewing, mental health as well as interviews with the I.W.W workers union and personal accounts on current Palestinian living conditions. What separates *Blackthorn* from the countless other similar publications is that it does its part to stay informative without becoming self-righteous. Highly recommended. (PS)

Free, PO Box 11046, Portland OR 97211

◆Committed To The Custody Of The Attorney General

He doesn't pay rent. He doesn't worry about where his next meal is coming from. He has no real bills to speak of. He lives inside cement walls and black bars. He's in prison. Seth Ferranti is serving a mandatory minimum sentence of 25 years for a nonviolent

first offense. In 28 pages of poetry, interwoven with artwork by a fellow inmate, he takes us through his routine at the New Jersey prison where he is treated like a number, a piece of cattle, an extra body for their in-house workforce. This collection of poetry is a mere glimpse into the life of a prisoner, one who feels that he was just a victim of the war on drugs while "perpetrating free enterprise." Seth writes for a marginalized population to give a voice to those who are kept from inquiring ears. (AA)

No price given, Seth Ferranti, 18205-083 Unit 5703-2, PO Box 2000, Fort Dix, NJ 08640, www.prisonerlife.com

Daybreak #3

More anarchist literature based out of Minneapolis. The articles tend to trail off into personal rants a bit too much for my liking. Unlike many anarchist papers though, *Daybreak* makes an attempt at light-heartedness and features a crossword puzzle and reviews mixed with its content. (PS)

Free, PO Box 14007, Minneapolis MN 55404

Desperate #11

A perverse comic about a space alien in love, or rather in lust, with the prostitute he watches over. We get sexual malformations, alien orgasms, obscure dream sequences, and a dog from space. I think it's an allegory about unrequited love. It's creepy, but it rings true. (DAL)

No price given, Gibous Productions, 16 Payne Ave., Sag Harbor, NY 11963, www.gibous.com

Die Trying #3

Die Trying is an interesting, albeit brief, personal zine. A well-detailed story of Robert's landlord woes comprises a majority of the read as well as a distracted review of the movie *Signs*, a Merle



Haggard concert review and some cute artwork scattered about. A bit more content wouldn't hurt, but a well-written zine nonetheless. (PS)
No price given, POB 948, Athens GA 30603

Fear Why The Mouse Can't Breathe #4

It's hard to tell whether these pieces are intended as prose or poetry. Regardless, each piece reads a bit more obscured than the other. While I commend the author's bravery, it seems that this overly apologetic, self-loathing writing might work better on livejournal.com. (PS)

One stamp, 5258 Five Fingers Way, Columbia MD 21045

15th Precinct #6

An Australian punk zine with a professional layout. The features on some of punk's bigger names (AFI, Operation Ivy) will attract readers worldwide, but there's a heavy concentration on Australian bands. There are also interviews, scene reports, and a great 27-track CD showcasing their scene. (PS)
PO Box 1390, Capalaba QLD 4157, Australia,
www.15thprecinct.net

☛Fleep

Recent articles in publications from *Asian Week* to *Time* have hailed *Fleep* creator Jason Shiga's comic genius. Originally a mathematics major at UC-Berkeley, Shiga fortuitously enrolled in a "Graphic Novel as Literature" course and discovered a passion for cartooning. (Rumor has it *Optic Nerve* mastermind Adrian Tomine was in the same class). Winning a Xeric Foundation grant in 1999 placed him in the company of legendary underground comics such as Brian

Ralph, Jen Sorensen, and, not coincidentally, Adrian Tomine. *Fleep* traces the plight of Jimmy, who, after stepping into a phone booth to let his wife know he's running late, becomes trapped by slabs of concrete that completely block his view to the outside. Solving puzzles is a recurring theme in Shiga's work, and *Fleep* is no different. Jimmy slowly uncovers clues as to his location as well as how to contact the outside, all the while calculating how much oxygen he has left before hallucinations set in. Shiga's illustrations are uncluttered and bubble-like. The handwritten text looks a lot like my printing circa ninth grade, but don't be fooled by simplicity. Shiga's complex meditation on chance and the science of survival confirms his status as artist and genius. (JD)

\$5, PO Box 10952, Portland, OR 97296-0952,
www.sparkplugcomicbooks.com

Green Anarchy #10

A journal of ultraradical news and views from around the world, brought to you by your friendly neighborhood anarchists. They're against electricity, petroleum products, money, work, industry, pacifism, consensus, and organizations of any kind. What are they for? Trees, endangered animals, organic produce, and, alas, the murderous depravity of the Unabomber. (DAL)

\$3, PO Box 11331, Eugene, OR 97440

Heckler #58

I'm a virtual stranger to skate culture, but from page one on, I felt right at home reading *Heckler*. This glossy features eye-popping photography and unexpected pleasant surprises (like an interview with Ugly

Casanova or the indie-rock slant to the review section). Scott Bourne is this issue's cover boy. (JD)
No price listed, 1915 21st St., Sacramento, CA 95814, www.heckler.com

It Lives #1

Esoteric monster comics that make you wanna don a rubber mask and spit slime by Ted May. A favorite was "Toilet Battle," where two unwitting action-figure sized superheroes duke it out on a toilet seat with the looming doom of the flush. Lots of pig-nosed people, too. (AA)
\$2, 1115 Louisville, #2N, St. Louis, MO 63139,
www.uscatastrophe.com/itlives

It's All Gravy #1

A sloppily made zine for and by East Los Angeles and South Central kids about their punk scene—"because you were ghetto way before you were punk." A good read for SoCal kids, it has an activist/Maoist slant. (AA)
Free. Raymond N. Fuentes, 1849 E. Florence Ave., Los Angeles, CA 90001, gravyzine@hotmail.com

Jersey Beat #72

Jersey's very own scene zine features interviews with Superdrag, the Realistics, Mike Watt, a Drive-Thru records profile, and much more. Jam-packed with more interviews, record reviews and obligatory columns than you can shake a stick at. (AA)
\$3, 418 Gregory Ave., Weehawken, NJ 07086,
www.jerseybeat.com

☛Kweer Corps International #2

This zine is off to a great start with its second issue. The format and variety of contributors makes it

ABOUT OUR REVIEWS: We make every attempt to review all the zines (or magazines) we receive, as long as they are released independently. However, despite our best efforts, not every zine ends up in here for a myriad of reasons. Records marked with a little eye (☛) are designated as "highlight" reviews by the reviewer. That means it's a zine that really stands out for them this time around, but just because a review doesn't have an eye doesn't mean it isn't good. Finally, if a reviewer doesn't like your zine, it's just one person's opinion, so don't freak out. We're sure you put a good deal of work into your project and that alone is worth some congratulations!



accessible to anyone. Pieces like "The Crucial Need for Flamboyance," "What I Hate About Mainstream Queers," and reviews of Fagatron and The Gossip shows give it an energetic attitude. I really liked the section on early queercore/riot grrrl flyers and zines from the UK. Their diverse contributors can only help the growth of future issues. This is a great, inspiring zine cover to cover. (CS)
\$2, KCI c/o Hank, PO Box 3411, Tallahassee FL 32315-3411, queersfightharder@yahoo.com

Lechery

Like too many movies, this comic zine looks good but has a bad storyline. Great drawing style, but it's hampered by immaturity. I'm not sure if it's supposed to be sarcastic or just stupid, but the humor is lost on me. (CS)
No price given, Gibous Productions, 16 Payne Ave., Sag Harbor, NY 11963, olddebra@aol.com

Miscreant Mag #2

Sincere odes to mainstream rock and hip-hop musicians. I think this would be more enjoyable if it weren't done with the writing style of a weekly newspaper. Poems and graffiti photos are thrown in for good measure. Good heart, great potential. (JB)
No price given, miscreant@hotmail.com

My Fat Irish Ass! #4

While I generally think humor in zines is a good thing, this one stretches it a bit. The jokes start out well, but as it gets further into the issue, the humor gets more into left field. While it is mildly amusing to see the cast of the *Family Circus* telling vulgar jokes, it's not really funny when it's just sexist bullshit—or the one with the father drooling that has a caption about him being a stroke victim. It's not like the jokes are that original anyway. On a lighter note, there's an interview with a rock 'n' roll band called *Cheerleaders Of The Apocalypse* (which was interesting), a few record reviews, and some funny stories. This would actually be a lot better if the editor took more time to write stories instead of putting new captions on cartoons. I'd also have an easier time stomaching this if it weren't obviously intended to offend me. (JB)
\$1, PO Box 65391 Washington, DC 20035, omel-lain@starpower.net

Orchid

The concept of this comic book is intriguing: "A collection of Victorian stories adapted to comic form." Some of the stories are a bit hard to follow in this form, perhaps because they're pretty far removed from their original print. David Lasky's adaptation of Poe's "The Raven" is the standout. Even if you've read it a hundred times in English class, Lasky's postmodern take gives it a whole new excitement. Kevin Huizenga's modern spin on "Green Tea" and FG Loring's elaborate, intricate take on "The Tomb of Sarah" are also excellent. Most interesting is how each artist's style seems to fit the old stories in a new way. This isn't your ordinary comic book, but something really unique that stands out among all the super heroes and *Ghost Worlds*. (CS)

\$8, Sparkplug Comic Books, PO Box 10952, Portland, OR 97296-0952, www.sparkplugcomic-books.com

Other People's Photographs #2

This is somewhat similar to *Found* zine, only this time the author has assembled photos left behind while working at a photo lab. Amateur photos put in this context gives them a new, voyeuristic theme where you can make up your own story. It's better than reality TV any day. (CS)
No price given, Second Period Industries, PO Box 948, Athens, GA 30603

Pacific Bell, The Dream Of The Cold War, Part 1

Solid collection of poetry with a nice mix of formalism and a more contemporary tone. Sometimes overwrought, but ultimately an original and at times lovely effort with a strong sense of place. The packaging is unique, too, with nuts and bolts instead of staples. Don't take this on an airplane. (DAL)

\$10, 10th Ave E Publishing, 1459 N. Leavitt St., 2nd Floor, Chicago, IL 60622, www.10thAve.net

Paul the Punker #7

Check Paul out as he's trippin' on acid and making an ass out of himself in the process. It's a crudely drawn yet mildly amusing chronicle done in eight pages. (AA)
\$1, F.N.S. Publishing, PO Box 1299, Boston, MA 02130, www.geocities.com/spatt77/

Perpetually Twelve #1

Sometimes it's good to see a zine with no redeeming social value that's actually funny. Everything is mostly the kind of nonsensical, goofy fun like you had in junior high, but that's the point. There's also a good how-to article on carving eraser stamps. (CS)
No price given, puntmedia@msn.com

Philadelphia Independent, The, Vol. 1, Issues 1 & 2

This is everything a great community paper should be. It's impeccably designed with a humorous old-time newspaper flare; it's funny, charming and chock full of interesting articles, reviews, fiction pieces (about David Lee Roth, no less) and cartoons. *PI* supports art and music shows in Philadelphia, making them doubly cool. (JD)
50 cents, PO Box 3693, Philadelphia, PA 19125

Philadelphia Independent, Volume 1, Issue 3

There's something charming about sipping cider over a newspaper so enormous it envelopes my entire table at the coffeshop. This local zine comes out seasonally and covers community issues while dotting it with urban hipster interest. (I mean that in the kindest way.) Besides its unique format, the design mimics early newspaper design, a feat only Chris Ware does better. As a fellow designer noted, "Man, they designed the shit out of that!" The ornamentation and composition is remarkably beautiful. All of the articles are well-researched and well-written alternative news articles of local interest, which makes an outsider like me feel like a tourist appreciating the local color. The informa-

tion is packed in, throwing random reviews whenever they see fit (a Hot Snakes review tacked on an exposure piece on Dysrhythmia?), so it makes for an overwhelming read. Features include the history of a skate park called Love Park, architecture of The Hale Building, short fiction pieces, editorials, and local art/music coverage. Topped with a chess column, a small classifieds section, and an events calendar, this newspaper is definitely something impressive. Illadelph, consider yourself lucky to attain such a fine publication. (VC)
It says 50 cents, but I'd send a little more for postage, PO Box 3693, Philadelphia, PA 19125

Philadelphia Independent, The, Volume 1, #4

This is Philly's new broadsheet newspaper. It might seem odd to read a newspaper from another city, but it's rare to find a paper this good. An interview with Aaron Cometbus, an article on RAP snacks, and other national and local news. The quality is excellent in comparison with most other newspapers. (JB)
50 cents, 307 N. Market St., 2nd Floor, Philadelphia, PA 19106, www.phindie.com

Picaresque #3

At first I was shaking my fist at the *Punk Planet* review gods, as it appears they've chosen me as the authority on melodramatic teenage poetry zines. Thankfully, about nine pages into this, a second cover of sorts awaits, and we're onto something entirely different. *Picaresque* is sort of a stream-of-consciousness account of the author's teenage years. These quickly digested paragraphs flow well and are usually quite funny. Brendan does an excellent job at setting a scene, and we have all experienced most of these are encounters. Scattered throughout the personal anecdotes are a ton of pop-culture references that are equally entertaining. There's nothing special about the layout here, but when your writing can make a reader laugh, who needs a pretty picture? (PS)
No price given, 3 Sharpley Ave., Stawell, Victoria Australia 3380, brendanrocks@hotmail.com

Poop Soup #5

This cut-and-pasted creation lacks much content. It includes quotes from metal bands, a list of jobs that "famous" punks had, and an article talking about a pleasant experience with a cop. Entertainment for about 30 seconds—worth the asking price. (JB)
Free, FNS Publishing, PO Box 1299 Boston, MA 02130, www.geocities.com/spatt77

Rated Rookie Vol. 1, No. 3

With *McSweeney's* steering a rocketship to cult stardom and mainstream fringe appeal, literary rags know what it's like to be hip. These days, all the pseudo-intellectuals at the bar seem to edit one with contributions from their charming peers. This isn't a bad thing. Better to express it on paper for the masses than to interrupt my game of pool with a witty anecdote about how you wrote "BORN LOSER" on your Ivy League college application and got in on the first wave of irony. While the air of intellectual stimulation reeks of downplayed

pretension ("I can't help it if I'm a pop-culture genius and articulate myself enough to make people laugh hysterically."), these people also get pimples, fart, and dig raunchy sex. This is the kind of hipster *Rated Rookie* exposes. A magazine of short anecdotes, rants, and general hoohah by some pottymouthed smartypants equals instant success. Toeing the line between smart and funny, readers will witness some of the finest writing about blow jobs, tattoos gone wrong, and abstinence karaoke. Features include interviews with comic artist "Salty" Dave Bryson and a piss-porn producer, but this zine's true essence lies in its hilarious filler fodder. (VC)

\$2.50, 28-07 38th St., Suite 4L, Astoria, NY 11103, www.rated-rookie.com

Reason To Believe #7

This international version of *HeartattaCk* focuses more on the underlying punk subculture. The content still falls into the common hardcore straight-white-boy-tokenistic mentality, so sometimes it's dogmatic and condescending. By creating a forum for the European punk network, this is a must for anyone interested in European DIY. (VC) \$3, 145-149 Cardigan Road, Leeds, LS6 1LJ, UK, www.rtbzine.org

Reporter Little Black

Reporter is a wonderfully rich, detailed, sprawling self-published comic about a cub reporter in 1950s Willoughby (a small town in upstate New York) engrossed in colorful intrigue involving haunted houses, dead criminals, aspiring writers, an international quest for an amulet, plenty of ghosts, and a nice girl with a nice cat. The wonderfully complex story plays out in the regular comics, but a good entry point may be the *Reporter* collection, which spackles together the eerie, profound, fascinating universe through tight vignettes of varying lengths. The black and white art is distinctive, powerful, and highly skilled, and it varies in style from story to story, perfectly matching the themes. The large cast of characters are introduced in bits ranging from snippets of conversations to full-fledged mini stories. Back stories and themes come out through hints and flashes, and part of the fun is trying to piece everything together. This is intelligent and clever writing with a heart and a sense of mystery, and the artwork shows a great talent. DIY comics at their best. (DAL)

\$8, Sparkplug, PO Box 10952, Portland, OR 97296-0952

Skyscraper #12

As usual, this issue is chock full of tons of interviews and record reviews. The White Stripes, The Flaming Lips, Sloan, Hot Hot Heat and all the other hipster favorites you know and love from every other magazine. (CS)

\$4.99, Skyscraper Magazine, PO Box 4432, Boulder, CO 80306, www.skyscrapermagazine.com

Slug Mag #166

I've never been to Salt Lake City, but the ads for the clubs, guitar shops, piercing studios, vegetarian cafes, tiki lounges and record stores gave me a sense

of place. I like the combative letters section. Who wouldn't love an interview that starts: "Q: Why is your music so dark and sad? Do you have a personal grudge against society? A: I have a personal grudge against people who hold Dictaphones too close to my face." (DAL)

2225 S. 500 E. Ste. 206 Salt Lake City, UT 84106

Sugar Needle #21

This issue combines two of my favorite topics in the world: candy and crafts. The back cover itself is a design made from stamping ink with Panda licorice, Howard's Mints and a marshmallow rope. The multitude of cute projects is sure to please crafters and candy connoisseurs alike. Highly recommended. (JD)

Candy or zine trades, \$1 or a first class stamp, PO Box 300152, Minneapolis, MN 55403

Switchblade #2

Switchblade looks like a copy-cat mishmash of *Maximum RocknRoll*, *HeartattaCk*, and *Punk Planet* and covers pretty standard newsprint-zine topics. Featured interviews include Dag Nasty and the webmasters of *Burningangel.com*. Hopefully *Switchblade* will develop its own style while remaining "strongly rooted in the punk scene" (indeed). (JD)

No price listed, 240 Willowood Drive, Wantagh, NY 11793, www.switchbladezine.tk

Timothy's Monster #2

This zine documents Ryan's trip to Europe. There are plenty of details, but not a lot of universals. I learned some things by reading this, but I didn't feel that the writing was very interesting. The layout is very minimal, and most of the stories don't have too much depth. (JB)

\$1, Ryan Bareither, 5827 N. Morton, Spokane, WA 99207, antifa7@yahoo.com

Twenty-Four Hours #2

I wanted to like this. After all, the editor promised "Tom Waits lookalikes, teenagers in love, free spirits traveling ... [by] train" and a piece on slam poetry in Alaska (who knew?). Featured articles and fiction vacillated between OK and mediocre. The plain layout contributed to an overall sense of blandness. (JD)

\$3, 6002 Dunbury Drive, Austin, TX 78723, www.23skidoo.org/~hours

Unaffiliated #3

Sensationalistic political ranting only gets worse when there's bad poetry and fiction tacked onto it. One of them reads like a Catharsis song! The articles are informative and dogmatic—one offers suggestions for herbal abortions, but description makes it seem like a leap of faith rather than an actual procedure. (VC)

Free (but I'd at least send a dollar), PO Box 368, Lyons, CO 80540, unaffiliated2@hotmail.com

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books

West-Bloc Dissident: A Cold War Memoir

By William Blum
Soft Skull Press

It's hard to dislike a book as sincere and direct as this one. But the title might lead you to believe that William Blum is trying to do more than he is, which could result in disappointment. The problem is the word "memoir." Technically, *West-Bloc Dissident* is precisely that. For better or worse, though, mention of the genre conjures up unreasonable expectations these days.

To be sure, this is a great time for memoir. Now that people have reconciled themselves to the idea that every text is a fiction, they're buying up non-fiction titles like Krispy Kreme doughnuts. And autobiography is leading the way. But it frequently comes with a twist. Sure, Dave Eggers is telling his life story, but *A Heartbreaking Work of Staggering Genius* is also a tour-de-force of lighthearted self-reflexivity. Frank McCourt's even more popular *Angela's Ashes* is a case study in the exaggerated lyricism of people whose ancestors and white supremacist uncles wear kilts. Even *Punk Planet* is in on the trend, with Associate Editor Joel Schalit's *Jerusalem Calling*, which fuses his first-person tale of "growing up complicated"

with extended philosophical ruminations. Like the potentially life-changing Marcel Proust, whose *In Search of Lost Time* set the benchmark for autobiographical writing that's simultaneously fiction and non-fiction, contemporary memoirists use the confessional mode because it allows them to do things that the conventional novel will not.

And that's what makes *West-Bloc Dissident: A Cold War Memoir* so refreshing. Blum doesn't seem to be interested in doing any of those things. He merely wants to relate the major experiences of his life as an American leftist, from protesting the war in Vietnam to supporting Ralph Nader's 2000 Presidential Campaign. Blum's prose is never showy. And his commitment to truth—or at least what those post-everything intellectuals call a "truth effect"—frequently deprives his story of drama.

The chapter on his time in Chile is a perfect example. Blum explains how he got caught up in the excitement of Salvador Allende's Socialist experiment, helping in his own small way as a foreign journalist to counter the right-wing's relentless attacks on Allende's government. Anyone who knows the basic facts about the subsequent coup d'état that drove that government from power and thousands of people, Allende included, to their graves will antic-

ipate the climax to Blum's tale. Only we don't get one. Blum leaves the country before the 1973 elections that triggered the coup. He informs us what happened to some of his fellow American leftists, but refuses to imagine a scene that he didn't witness personally.

There's real humility in Blum's approach to personal and political history. Although it might be nice for him to step back every once and a while to place his tale in a broader context, his decision to construct a largely chronological narrative has its merits. For one thing, *West-Bloc Dissident* largely avoids the progress-minded storytelling that shapes every incident to fit the last chapter to come. There's not much closure at the end of Blum's memoir, no grandfatherly advice to young radicals. Instead, we're left with a reminder that the 1960s are still with us, along with a sense of optimism. Blum never betrayed his political values, despite the many temptations to do so. In the midst of this second coming of Nixon-esque paranoia, we would do well to follow his example. —Charlie Bertsch

The Other Israel: Voices of Refusal and Dissent

by Roane Carey and Jonathan Shainin, eds.
The New Press

Israel's left has rarely been as active as today, with many new anti-occupation and social opposition groups forming, and yet simultaneously so completely marginalized. There is a paradox wherein the left is intellectually more alive and possessed of vastly greater analytic talents than mainstream politics, but has pitifully miniscule ability to translate those ideas into political power. The angrily acute reportage of *Ha'aretz*' Amira Hass from the occupied territories has become legend, but the immediacy of witness that she and other good reporters provide means little if anything in creating an Israeli public visualization of the suffering of Palestinians. Literature of contemporary social testimony, in the Middle East as elsewhere, too often reads like a report to future historians of catastrophe more than as part of the immediate formations of political power.

This volume of collected recent essays covers a substantial swath of left-wing political diversity, although few of its genuinely newer voices. Most authors in the volume could have been named as opposition intellectuals 20 years ago, and about half the essays come from middle-class academics accustomed to for-

ign audiences. The span of the contributors includes such quasi-establishment writers as former attorney-general Michael Ben-Yair, to Arafat sycophants like Uri Avnery (in self-aggrandizing opposition for 50 years, since founding the weekly *Ha'Olam Ha'ze*) and Neta Golan. There is a near-complete absence of either Mizrahi or Arab voices in this collection, as if they did not constitute either "the other Israel" or "voices of refusal and dissent." Also among the missing are working-class and religious perspectives—excepting one thoughtful and moving essay by Shama Leibowitz, an attorney and graduate of Yeshivat Har Etzion, known as the intellectual bastion of Gush Emunim. What these lacunae suggest is the deficiency inherent in a conceptualization of the Israeli left that begins and ends with *Ha'aretz* op-ed columns, where a number of these essayists appear regularly.

Representativeness takes a strange turn with the inclusion of a reprinted *Le Monde* interview with an ultimate insider in Israeli society, Ami Ayalon, former chief of the Shin Bet security services. The interview reveals that Ayalon's views on the injustice and untenability of the occupa-

tion parallel those of many Israeli leftists. Ayalon's post-retirement opinions are well known in Israel, if less so outside the country. Yet this only raises the question of why, having the common sense to see the creation of "bottomless despair" among Palestinians as a driving force towards bi-national nihilism, Ayalon agreed to participate in its manufacture in Shin Bet offices? While Ayalon may now express his dissent from a privileged position as an international business executive, he never manifested his opposition by refusing to participate in the occupation. For a response to such putative liberalism, read Gideon Levy's passionate essay letter to Shimon Peres, "Tell the Truth, Shimon," an excellent example of naming political hypocrisies.

The practical political heart of this collection lies in a section entitled 'Refusal', consisting of an essay by Yishai Menuchin, a major in the army reserves and a leader of the Yesh Gvul refusal movement; Yigal Shohat's speech at Tel Aviv's Tzavta club; and personal-voice articles by Neve Gordon and others. Most of the "electable left" repudiates the refusal of soldiers to follow orders or report for reserve duty, often on the spe-

ABOUT OUR REVIEWS: All books reviewed in Punk Planet are independently published by small or academic presses. Due to space constraints and length requirements, not all books we receive will be reviewed, as it takes quite a bit more time to read & review a book (and write the corresponding review) than it does to stick a CD in the player and write a snappy capsule. Please send all books to the reviews address listed in the front of the magazine.



cious argument that it wishes to preserve an ultimate capacity to order right-wing soldiers out of the territories. Notwithstanding the delusion necessary to sustain a belief that settlers and their kin will peacefully evacuate once given legal vacate orders by some possible government interested in peacemaking, this argument essentially holds that a future well-ordered state is to be constructed on enforcement of acknowledged present-day injustice. However, the IDF refuseniks actualize an ethics of personal opposition that must ultimately prevail if Sharonism and its theo-fascist allies are to be defeated. Although the IDF has been reluctant to be drawn into handing down heavy prison sentences against its 'politicals,' that attitude of institutional avoidance is coming near its end. Menuchin argues that participation in civil protest against the occupation is insufficient, for "Being a citizen in a democracy carries with it a commitment to democratic values and a responsibility for your actions. It is morally impossible to be both a devoted democratic citizen and a regular offender against democratic values. Depriving people of the right of equality and freedom, and keeping them under occupation, is by definition an undemocratic act." —Joe Lockard

Warm Voices Rearranged: Anagram Record Reviews

By Brendan Kearney and Gregg Turkington
Drag City

Prickles crawl up my spine and I shiver: Merriam-Webster's *Unabridged Dictionary* explains that "anagram" as a transitive verb means "to rearrange (the letters of a text) in order to discover a hidden message." In essence, to discern a message invisible to the eye of the self-complacent burgher—a deeper, covert (underground, if you will) communiqué from beyond the beyond: an arcane revelation, a rarified truth.

Perhaps Brendan Kearney and Gregg Turkington, the shadowy co-authors of *Warm Voices Rearranged: Anagram*

Record Reviews, are cabalists skilled in esoteric doctrine and the mysterious arts. In their preface they reveal that they view the art of anagrams "not as some genteel parlor-game, but as a fearful and probably unlawful endeavor akin to séances . . ." So, who are the little known authors of this curious book?

Their reputations reek of Bay Area underground musical signifiers during the 1990s. Kearney, a veteran of legendary folk-noise band Caroliner Rainbow, was the proprietor of Nuf Sed Records, as well as a collaborator and member of groups ranging from Tarnation to the Thinking Fellers. Current Faxed Head Greg Turkington fronted the distinctly un-PC Zip Code Rapists, as well as founded the Amarillo label, who issued records by the likes of non-comedian Neil Hamburger, parlor Satanist Anton Lavey, and guitar gods The Sun City Girls. Finally, zinesters will appreciate that Kearney published the rare *Nothing Doing*, while Turkington started the collectible *Breakfast Without Meat*.

Kearney and Turkington's *Warm Voices* is a survey of pop/rock history through anagram couplets from Chuck Berry to Sleater-Kinney. One might think of the reviews as resembling backward masking in the realm of words about song rather than song itself. For example,

The Butthole Surfer's latest compact disc release launches a *Weird Revolution*

Our evaluation: O' what lame shit. The rebel dunces self-destruct. Practice, losers!

Or:

Judas Priest's heavy metal album, *Point of Entry*

Apt title...refers to man's anus. Viably humped? Joy!

Call me Tipper Gore, but the flagrant pottymouth spotting the manuscript will be too rich for some. But for Kearney and Turkington, there are no holy cows. You think the Stooges, the Birthday Party and Black Flag rocked hard? You think Jello Biafra deserves credit for his leftist political activism? Do you hold Captain Beefheart

close to your heart? Do you hate to see women, people of color, gays, Christians, white men, gourmands and junkies slandered? To enjoy the book one must cut the authors a lot of slack. If you are the least bit uptight, go get that crow bar now and apply it to your ass.

The project has been criticized on the basis that all the anagrams should follow a single structure, otherwise it's cheating. Often, they include a first line with the band's name and album. Sometimes the band's name is a possessive:

Pavement's *Crooked Rain, Crooked Rain*

Over-rated indie-rock crooks.
Nap? Amen!

Sometimes the top line is elaborate with modifying clauses, as with one of several uncomplimentary anagrams on the Grateful Dead.

Originally, my thought was that this made the project too easy. One could start with the second line—where the emphasis is on the critique—then move back to the first and shape it to meet the needs of the second. Such dialogue between the lines is not supposed to exist. But this criticism does not hold up because the critics haven't demonstrated rules for sets of anagrams. Just because the book presents a set of anagrams (70 pages worth) doesn't mean that each must take on one monolithic structure. Within any set of words there's an anagram, point blank. Like a Ouija Board, Kearney and Turkington's anagrams uncannily tell the truth (if any criticism can be deemed objective). Many will find resonance with the following:

Britney Spears' massive hit CD, *Oops! I Did It Again!*

Those big tits and sepia nips! "I'm dairy-core's diva!"

In two lines (less than a haiku), the authors crystallize their assessments with style and humor. That could save a lot of trees—and a lot of hot air.

—Jillian Steinberger ©

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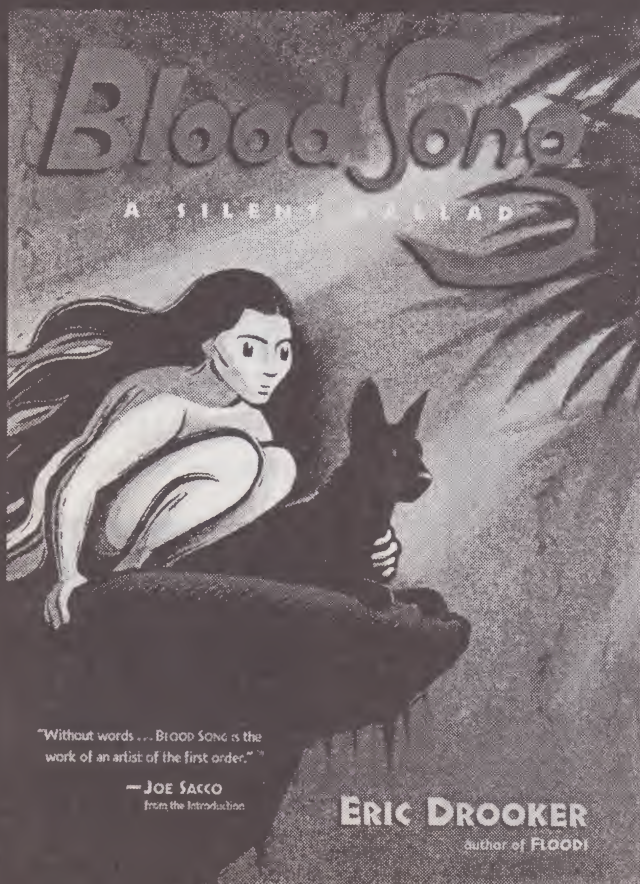
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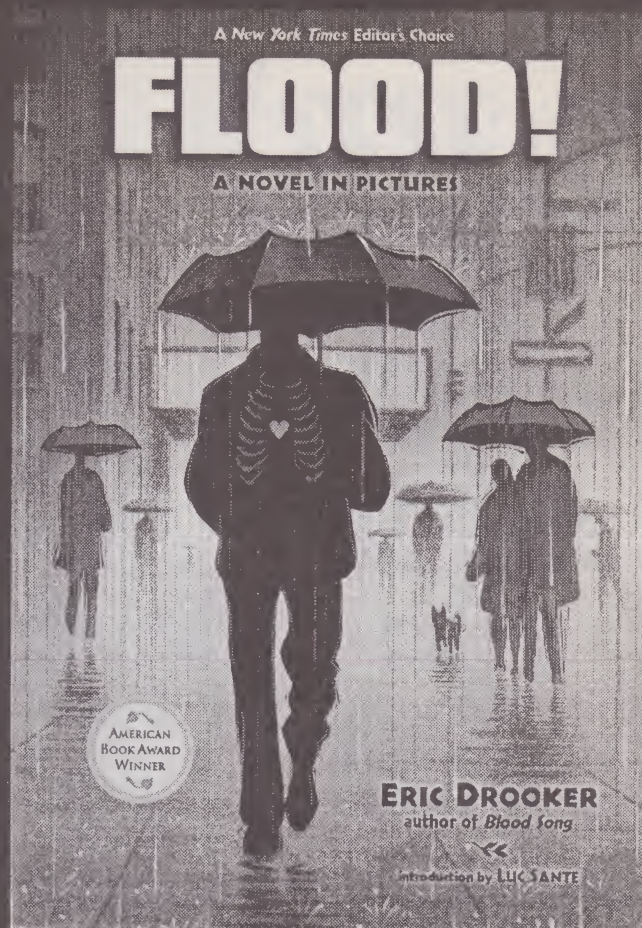
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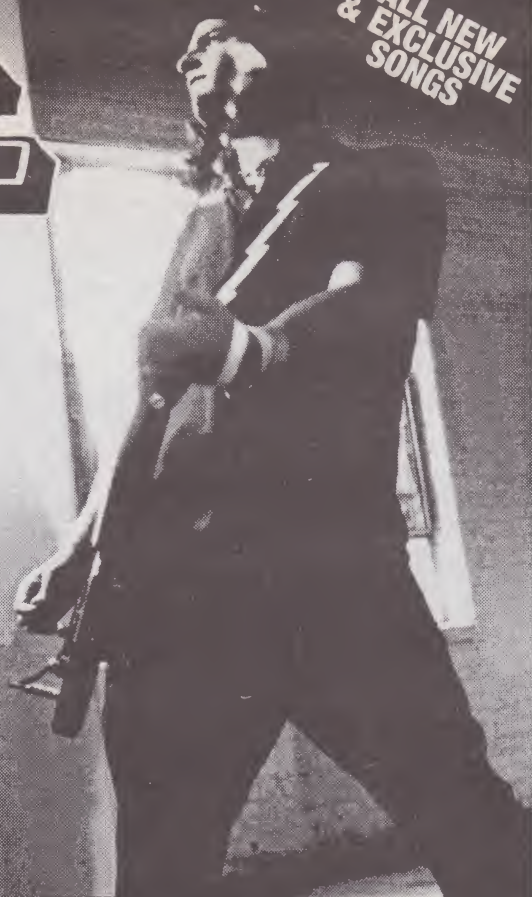
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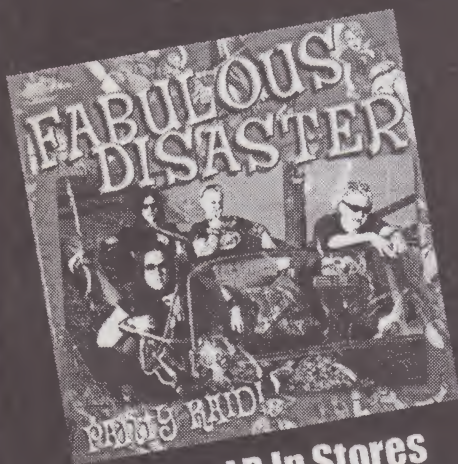


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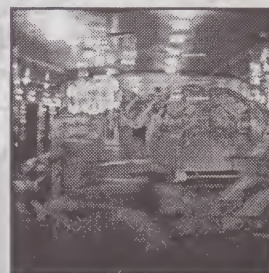


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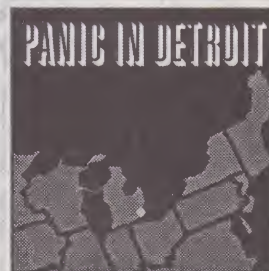
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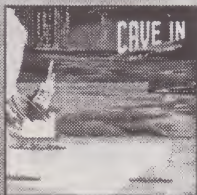
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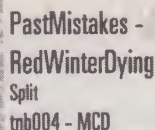
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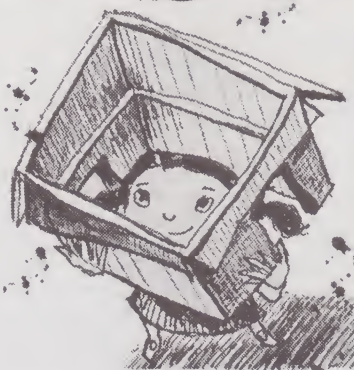
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PP45 DOUBLE FEATURE cover story! This issue not only shines the spotlight on consumer-rights activist, 2000 presidential candidate, and all-around hellraiser RALPH NADER, but it also features an in-depth interview with uncompromising independents SHELLAC. Just for you, PP45 serves up a little double trouble—two cover stories for the price of one! Also interviewed in this issue: Latino punk entertainer EL VEZ; author PLESANT GEHMAN; analog electronic rockers MOUSE ON MARS; the new band to emerge from the ashes of Smart Went Crazy, THE BEAUTY PILL; queer zine-maker RUDY SCUTTER; filmmaker STEPHANIE BLACK; and independent country-rock and death-penalty activist STEVE EARL. Articles in this issue include a hair-raising look at THE YAZOO BACKWATER PUMP PROJECT IN THE MISSISSIPPI DELTA—these pumps, if built, could bring environmental devastation to this fragile region; BACK TO SHATILAH follows author Ali Abunimah as he visits a Palestinian refugee camp; and HONDURAS: THE OTHER COLUMBIA looks at the US's secret involvement in the Honduran government's war against its own people. Plus columns, reviews, DIY and much, much more! 144 pgs

PP46 ART & DESIGN 2! PP46 features FOUR LIMITED EDITION COVERS this time by artists JAIME HERNANDEZ (LOVE & ROCKETS COMICS), SHEPPARD FAIRY (OBEY GIANT POSTERS), NIKKI MCCLURE (Olympia, WA paper-cut artist) and JAY RYAN (Chicago, IL poster artist). Interviews in Art & Design 2 include Hernandez, Fairy, McClure, and Ryan along with filmmaker SADIE SHAW, designer ELLIOT EARLES, graffiti artists JOCYLIN SUPERSTAR and LITTLE MISS ATTITUDE, San Francisco's not-for-profit POND GALLERY, and CRASS collageist GEE VAUCHER. Articles in A&D2 include a profile of CHICAGO'S RADICAL STREET ARTISTS THE DEPARTMENT OF SPACE AND LAND RECLAMATION, an overview of DIY COMICS, a story about the MURALS OF CHICAGO'S PILSEN NEIGHBORHOOD, and a look at the PROJET MOBILVIRE/BOOK-MOBILE PROJECT that is bringing zines and artist books into under-

served neighborhoods. Plus reviews, columns, DIY and more. 168 pgs.

PP47 WAR SONGS. Punk Planet #47 takes stock of the Bush administration's WAR AGAINST TERRORISM. Is it effective? Is it moral? Is it legal? We pose the questions that the mainstream media isn't asking to experts—the answers are eye-opening to say the least. PP47 dedicates an entire section to looking at the war from many different angles in interviews, essays, and articles. Sure to be controversial, PP47 pulls no punches in its analysis of the war. But it's not just bombs and tanks in this issue of Punk Planet—after taking an issue off to write about art & design, PP47 returns with tons of great music interviews. Interviewed in this issue are: classic queer punk TOM ROBINSON reminisces on the spirit of '77; Pacific Northwest stalwarts UNWOUND; the Indigo Girls' AMY RAY talks about her independent solo project; dyke punks THE HAGGARD take their bikes out for a spin; buzz band THURSDAY drops some knowledge; XBXX gives their last interview; and Punk Planet helps MINT RECORDS celebrate their 10 year anniversary. Also interviewed just in time for the Olympics: the BURN THE OLYMPICS collective—a secretive group of activists devoted to direct action against the 2002 Olympic Games. In addition to the war coverage, and tons of interviews, PP47 features reviews, columns, fiction, DIY and more.

PP48 TO HELL AND BACK. Operating under the name George Eric Hawthorne, George Burdi was the flagbearer and general of the mid-'90s neo-nazi youth movement. But a 1995 jail term found Burdi questioning his own beliefs, and when he was free, he left the neo-nazi movement. In "To Hell and Back", Punk Planet 48 catches up with Burdi to talk about his past, his transformation, and his future. Controversial and disturbing, yet ultimately moving, this feature-length interview is not to be missed! Also interviewed in this issue: the unstoppable women-led band ERASE ERRATA; garage rock genre jumpers THE DIRTBOMBS; electronic sound artist OVAL; Afro-beat radicals

ANTIBALAS; street punk superstars THE SWINGING UTTERS; and radical educator and poet DEMETRAI MARTINEZ. Any articles in PP48? You betcha. Punk Planet looks at the DEATH OF DISTRIBUTION GIANT VALLEY and what the loss of a giant one-stop means for independents. PP travels to look at the FAILED DOLLARIZATION OF ECUADOR; and Andrew Dickson talks about TOURING WITH A DIY FILM. Need more? How about a DIY ON TRAVELLING AND WORKING ABROAD, plus columns, reviews, and much, much more.

PP49 BUSINESS AS USUAL? THE ROCKY RISE OF VAGRANT RECORDS Very few labels in the underground have had the meteoric success of California's Vagrant Records—nor the controversy that has come with it. In issue #49, Punk Planet turns its award-winning reporting to investigating Vagrant's business practices. Is the label's reputation for predatory band signings and larger-than-life marketing just sour grapes from competitors (as the label claims) or the emergence of a dangerous wolf in sheep's clothing (as its harshest critics contend)? Reporters Trevor Kelley and Kyle Ryan go beyond the rumors and delve into the fascinating story of the controversial punk label. ALSO IN PP49: Interviews with punk pioneers MIKE WATT and RICHARD HELL, rock 'n' rollers FEDERATION X, neo-wavers THE RAPTURE, nobel laureate (no kidding!) ADOLFO PEREZ, electronic underground mag XLR8R, buzz band NEW END ORIGINAL, Brits ELECTRELANE, and the always entertaining HOT WATER MUSIC. Articles (besides the cover story) include the story of Alex Sanchez, a LOS ANGELES GANG-PEACE ORGANIZER FACING DEPORTATION; the story of THE CIVIL SUIT AGAINST TWO SALVADORIAN GENERALS WHO NOW LIVE IN FLORIDA; and A FIRST PERSON ACCOUNT OF BEING "BANNED" FROM THE UNITED STATES POST-SEPTEMBER 11. All this plus columns, DIY, reviews, and much, much more.

PP50: OUR KIND OF TOWN. Punk Planet marks its 50th issue with an issue that celebrates the magazine's home: Chicago. Featuring a diverse

group of interviews and articles, PP50 showcases the many people, places, and things that make this city unique. To kick things off is the beautiful JON LANGFORD PAINTING of Chicago's Mayor Daley on the magazine's cover. Inside, Langford and bandmate Sally Timms wax philosophical about 25 YEARS OF THE MEKONS and what moving to Chicago has meant for the band. Also interviewed in this issue: post-rock poster darlings TORTOISE talk about why the critics got it all wrong; BLOODSHOT RECORDS explain the link between country and punk; the woman behind VENUS ZINE talks about creating her amazing publication; LOS CRUDOS' MARTIN SORRONDEGUY talks about why he's left Chicago; HOUSING ORGANIZER JAMES MUMM talks about fighting gentrification; GREEN PARTY CANDIDATE (AND PUNK) JASON FARBMAN talks about taking on Chicago machine politics; the two wonderful people behind HOMOCORE CHICAGO talk about the good old days; the braintrust behind the "dance show for kids of all ages" CHIC-A-GO-GO talk about making one of the best shows on cable access; death row inmate AARON PATTERSON talks about the brutal Chicago cop that beat him into confessing to a murder he didn't commit; indie hip-hopsters THE MOLEMEN drop some knowledge; and garage rockers THE DISHES make some noise. PLUS MANY MORE INTERVIEWS WITH FOLKS FROM CHICAGO. In addition, there's all the columns, reviews, DIYs, letters and everything else you've come to expect for 50 issues.

PP51 steers the car head-on into oncoming controversy with the emotional cover story, WAVE A WHITE FLAG: DODGING BULLETS IN THE OCCUPIED WEST BANK. In this moving first-hand account, author and frequent PP contributor Jeff Guntzel travels to the West Bank. Dodging bullets and checkpoints Jeff and a small team of dogged activists end up being the first Americans into the Jenin refugee camp after the Israeli Defense Forces leveled it. A truly heartbreaking story told with great empathy for both sides, Jeff's account is not to be missed. There's a

ton more don't-miss material in this issue of Punk Planet including Mark Andersen's (co-author of the DC punk history book Dance of Days) unique interview with BRATMOBILE'S ALLISON WOLFE and BLUEGRASS LEGEND HAZEL DICKENS—these two women from different backgrounds and different eras discover just how much they have in common. Also interviewed in PP51: AARON COMETBUS's amazing zine turns 20; EPITAPH RECORDS' CHIEF BRETT GUREWITZ talks about his drug addiction, re-joining Bad Religion and learning to love life again; rocker and all-around amazing woman SARAH DOUGHER; Billy Joe Armstrong's ADELINE RECORDS; truly insane rockers GUYANA PUNCH LINE bring the noise; queer punk ANDREW MARTINI (LIMPWRIST, KILL THE MAN WHO QUESTIONS); and much more. Articles in PP51 (in addition to Jeff's amazing account) include a profile of TRANSGENDERED ACTIVIST AND ARTIST ED VARGA; THE PRIVATIZATION OF THE PHILADELPHIA SCHOOL SYSTEM; and an account of the STRUGGLES OF DAY LABORERS IN CHICAGO. And more!

PP52 warms up the cold winter months with PAY TO CUM, an in-depth look at the growing trend of punk rock internet porn. Punk Planet's Chris Ziegler delves deep into the world of DIY porn to figure out if it's really offering something different—or is it just the same sleaze operating on a smaller scale? Ziegler's story offers a fascinating look into this world. Also in PP52: Interviews with THE KILLS, Allison from the much-loved Discount's new band; Sex Pistols photographer DENNIS MORRIS; instrumentalists DENALI; author ZOE TROPE; rockers THE HISSYFITS; the always entertaining punks THE FLESHIES (featuring a portrait drawn by cartoonist Janelle!); Oaklandish art collective NONCHALANCE; turntablist CHRISTIAN MARCLAY; political hardcore band BLOWBACK; and political thinker MICHAEL PARENTI talks about the "terrorism trap." Other articles in PP52 include a look at RADICAL LIBRARIANS; the FIGHT AGAINST WHITE-POWER MUSIC; and a look at how THE GAY PRIDE MOVE-

MENT HAS SOLD OUT. Also making its first appearance in Punk Planet #52 is the magazines ALL NEW FRONT SECTION, STATIC. While PP51 saw a reduction in the number of columnists writing for PP, PP52 sees the columns move to the back of the magazine and replaced by Static—almost a "zine within a zine" filled with shorter pieces about bands, people, artists, and more. It's totally new and very exciting. But even with the changes, everything you still have come to count on is here: reviews, columns, DIYs, and more... only better! And it's the longest issue of Punk Planet ever at 176 pages.

PP53 leads off with an amazing exclusive interview with the three members of the legendary JAWBREAKER. Seven years after the band broke up, Punk Planet was able to talk with Blake, Chris, and Adam about what happened and look at the lasting legacy of the band. A must-have for fans both new and old, this interview is ultra-candid and truly revealing. The story will only be told once and they told it to Punk Planet. PP53 also features EXTENSIVE COVERAGE OF THE COMING WAR IN IRAQ. In coverage that spans three sections of the magazine Punk Planet looks at life in the streets of Iraq, talks with ex-arms inspector Scott Ritter, and has a chat about the US' history with Iraq with investigative journalist Jeremy Scahill. Eye-opening and, well, downright scary, this coverage gives important background to the Bush administration's insistence on war. It's not all breakups and bombings in PP53, however. Also in the issue are interviews with JOHN DOE about going acoustic, Touch & Go dance party band !!! brings the funk, Lookout's THE PATTERN discusses the rebirth of rock n roll, indie hip-hop artist MR. LIF drops some knowledge, and Punk Planet visits with printer Jen Farrell and STAR-SHAPED PRESS. Additional articles include a look at the ROCK N ROLL CAMP FOR GIRLS; how the government is KILLING WEB RADIO; and a look at what happens to PRISONERS ONCE THEY'RE RELEASED. In addition, PP53 features our new front section STATIC, columns, DIY, reviews and much more. 160 pgs

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Where to find more information about this issue's features.

interviewed this issue:

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Eric has posted an amazing collection of his work—including freely reproducible images for activists—online at: www.drooker.com

Blood Song and *Flood!* are available from:
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articles in this issue:

Where Have All the Musicians Gone?

Allison Wolfe's band Bratmobile is online at:
www.bratmobile.com

Ted Leo records for Lookout! Records:
www.lookoutrecords.com

Justin Sane and Anti-Flag are online at:
www.anti-flag.com

The amazing Carrie Brownstein and Sleater-
Kinney release records on Kill Rock Stars:
www.killrockstars.com

Tony Pointless and Bull Gervasi's band
RAMBO has an album called *Wall of Death
the System* out on 625 Thrashcore:
www.625thrash.com

Chrissy Piper's book *The Unheard Music* is
available from insound.com.

Jon Langford has been in too many bands to
give a complete list here. The Mekons record
for Quarterstick Records: PO Box 25520
Chicago, IL 60625.

Mark Andersen co-founded Positive Force DC.
They are online at: www.positiveforcedc.com

Chad Clark and Basla Andolson's band The
Beauty Pill's album *The Cigarette from the
Future* is available from www.insound.com

Jenny Toomey is the Executive Director of the
Future of Music Coalition:
www.futureofmusic.org

Atom and His Package are online at:
www.atomandhispackage.com

Katy Otto's band Del Celio records for Exotic
Fever Records: www.exoticfever.com

Chris Hannah and Propagandi are online at:
www.g7welcomingcommittee.com/propagandhi

Chris Richards' band Q and Not U are online
at: www.qandnotu.org

Jodi Buonanno's band the Secret Stars is
online at: www.secretstars.com

Eric Funk and the Dillinger 4 record for Fat
Wreck Chords: www.fatwreck.com

Death or Glory: Remembering Joe Strummer

Joe's last two records are quite fantastic and avail-
able from Epitaph Records, www.epitaph.com. RIP

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The Musicians Lobby www.indiemusic.com
The Media Access Project
www.mediaaccess.org

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For more information about our eroding civil lib-
erties and what to do about it, visit:

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California movement to preserve the right to
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Justice Online www.justiceonline.org
Home of the Partnership for Civil Justice, a clear-
inghouse for legal updates on at-risk civil liberties.

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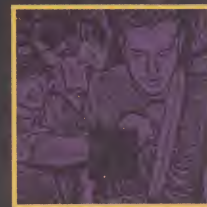
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